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THE
LOST CACHE.

A TALE OF HID TREASURE.

BY J. STANLEY HENDERSON,
AUTHOR OF "RED PLUME," "PRAIRIE CHICK," ETC.

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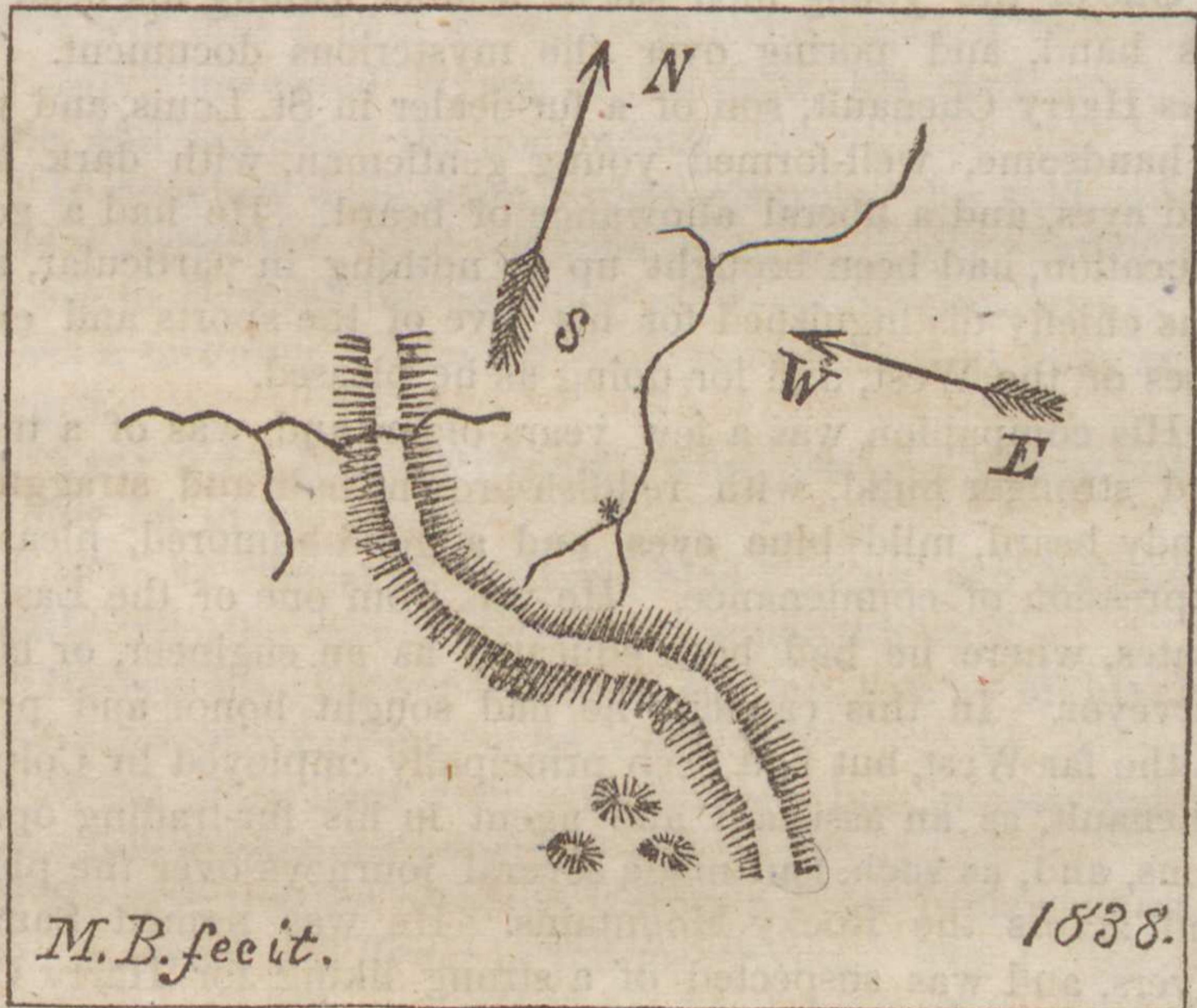
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THE LOST CACHE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERIOUS MAP



* W 40 to Spring. W 21:15 S, 124 to square buried stone. Circle of
XX strikes cache. Drop perpendicular below. M. B.

THE strange and somewhat incomprehensible document above set forth formed the subject of a discussion between two young men, in an upper room of a pleasant house in St. Louis. It was many—but not a great many—years ago ; before Pike's Peak had attracted its crowds of adventurers, before Washoe had been heard of, before the wealth in gold and silver of fair Idaho and Montana had been even suspected. The auriferous riches of California had been discovered, and were being rapidly developed, and that was a sufficient sensation to last a few years, even in America.

The map, or whatever the document should be called, was drawn on a piece of foolscap paper, of which the edges were considerably frayed, and the folds were so badly worn, that it nearly fell to pieces on being opened. The drawing had evidently been done with very poor ink, for the map had faded so much that sharp eyes were needed to distinguish its outlines, and the writing beneath it was almost illegible. It was a document of some antiquity, as was shown by its date, and there could be no doubt that it had seen hard service.

One of the young men sat at a table, leaning his head on his hand, and poring over the mysterious document. He was Harry Chenault, son of a fur-dealer in St. Louis, and was a handsome, well-formed young gentleman, with dark hair and eyes, and a liberal allowance of beard. He had a good education, had been brought up to nothing in particular, and was chiefly distinguished for his love of the sports and exercises of the West, and for doing as he pleased.

His companion was a few years older, and was of a taller and stronger build, with reddish-brown hair and straggling, sandy beard, mild blue eyes, and a good-humored, pleasant expression of countenance. He was from one of the Eastern States, where he had been educated as an engineer, or land-surveyor. In this capacity he had sought honor and profit at the far West, but had been principally employed by Colonel Chenault, as an assistant and agent in his fur-trading operations, and, as such, had made several journeys over the plains and across the Rocky Mountains. He was named Samuel Myers, and was suspected of a strong liking for Harry Chenault's sister, Madeline, which liking, his extreme modesty, or bashfulness, did not allow him to confess to its object, or to any one else. He was stout-hearted and talkative enough with men, but in the presence of Madeline Chenault could only blush like a beet and speak in monosyllables. He was leaning back in a chair, with his feet upon the window-sill, smoking a cigar, and regarding Harry with an amused smile on his bronzed features.

"Well, Harry," said he, "you have caught your elephant, and now what are you going to do with it?"

"It is easier to ask questions than to answer them," replied the other. "You may well say 'well,' Sam Myers, for this is

a deep one, and I am afraid that my rope is not long enough to reach to the bottom of it."

"Are you frightened already, or fretted? When there is such a great prize to be gained, you ought to have more patience. You will never become a millionaire if you go to work in this way."

"I wish you would stop laughing, and come and help me to draw some sense out of this thing, for my brains are fairly muddled."

"I will take a look at your wonderful paper, if only out of curiosity," answered Myers, as he drew his chair up to the table, and examined the document.

"It certainly does seem rather abstruse," he said, after a careful inspection, "and we must go to work systematically, if we are to discover the meaning of it—supposing always that it has a meaning. You say that you received it from an old trapper."

"Yes; from Jacques Renaud, who has been in my father's employ for many years."

"Is he an honest and reliable man? Can you believe implicitly what he says? Is he very superstitious?"

"He is somewhat superstitious, I admit, like all of his class, but his honesty can not be questioned."

"What story does your superstitious but honest man tell about this mysterious paper?"

"He says that he obtained it from a Crow Indian, whom he found starving and dying in the mountains. The Indian was grateful to the old man, although his life could not be saved, and gave him this paper before he died, telling him that a white man, who had been a prisoner with their tribe for several years, had found a large amount of treasure, which he had buried in a cache somewhere. The Crow said that the white man, with his assistance, had escaped, but they had got separated, during a violent snow-storm, in the mountains, and he supposed that the white man had perished; that he had picked up this paper, while making for himself a bed in the snow, and knew it to be the same that the white man had shown him, as containing directions for finding the concealed treasure."

"If there is any truth at all in the story, it is more probable

that the Indian murdered the white man, and would have taken the property if he could have found the clue to it. How long has the paper been in the possession of your old trapper?"

"He got it more than two years ago; but he had not been to the settlements since that time, and had hardly seen a white face. It was quite useless to him, as he could not read, and would not have been able to puzzle it out if he could have read it. He got out of money when he was here, and I gave him fifty dollars for the paper."

"You think you combined charity and speculation, I suppose. You might have made a worse use of your money, for I have no doubt that the poor fellow was in need. In order to consider the question logically, we must take it for granted that the Indian and the trapper both spoke the truth. It is rather hard to believe a story that comes to us through a lying Indian and an ignorant hunter, but we must admit the truth of it, or the investigation stops. We must also believe that the white man spoke the truth about finding and concealing the treasure, though it is straining credibility to believe the three statements. If he did find a treasure, what kind of a treasure was it? It is not likely to have been any thing else than gold or silver. I have often thought, when I have been in the mountains, and the country bordering on them, that gold might be found there, and have wished that I had time and money to spare, so that I might make an examination. I consider it possible, therefore, that a treasure may have been found. It is also possible that a white man might have been held as a captive among the Indians for a long time, and might have finally escaped, as you were told by the trapper, who was told by the Crow. We may thus admit—though the admission amounts to very little—the possibility of such a concealed treasure. We will now examine this document, to see whether it contains any internal evidence of being genuine, and, if so, whether it will tell us where the treasure is. Please hand me an atlas, Harry."

Harry brought an atlas, and Myers opened it, spreading the paper out before him, as if he was fond of the investigation of abstruse questions.

"Look here, Harry," said he, pointing with his pencil

toward the head-waters of the Missouri ; "here is the very place, I think, that is represented in the little map. See where the Missouri, bending southward, is fed by the streams of the mountains ; and see where the Lewis Fork cuts into the range, or ought to. The atlas, if my engineering skill and observation amount to any thing, is not correct, and the little map is right, or nearly so. That circumstance inclines me to believe in the authenticity of the document, as the old map must have been made by a person who was well acquainted with the locality."

"I am glad to hear you say so, and think there is a great deal of force in your argument. Internal evidence, if it is really conclusive, is always the best."

"I suppose it would not require very conclusive evidence to convince you of the existence of that buried treasure, but I am not disposed to believe so easily. Let us look a little further. This document is evidently the production of an educated man, and, very probably, of an engineer. The directions say : 'W 21:15 S,' and that can mean nothing else than west 21 degrees 15 minutes south. The bearings and distances are given as only one acquainted with surveying would be likely to give them. It is also evident that he made it—if it is not an imposition—for his own private use, to serve as a guide for finding the treasure, if he should return ; and that he has endeavored to make it ambiguous, so that it might not be comprehended, if it should fall into other hands."

"But what conclusion do you come to?" impatiently interrupted Harry.

"Don't go too fast, my boy ; you must let me work it out in my own way, or I shall never make any thing of it. The maker of the map has given us no measure for his distances ; he does not tell us whether he means feet, or chains, or rods, or miles. If the map had been forged by a surveyor, I think it likely that he would have expressed his distances in chains and links. That circumstance inclines me to believe it is not a forgery, though it is but slight evidence. I conclude that your old trapper must have lent himself to the imposition of some other person, or the white captive imposed on the Indian, or the document is genuine, and there is really such a treasure buried."

"I am sure that my old trapper is too honest to lend himself to any imposition."

"I consider that the white man could have had no object in deceiving the Indian with such an idle tale. If both these suppositions are true, there is only one conclusion we can come to."

"And that is, that the treasure is there. The next thing is, to find it."

"The conclusion is, that the treasure may be there. As for finding it, we may know that there is a needle in a haystack, but it would be foolish to attempt to search for it."

"Don't you suppose that we can find it by the directions under the map?"

"That remains to be seen; they are very blind, and as likely to lead us astray, as to bring us to the right place. The star in the map I presume to be the starting-point, and that must first be found, and it can only be guessed at. Then the directions say: 'West 40 to Spring.' It may mean forty feet, forty rods, or forty miles; it can not mean forty chains or links, for it is not likely that our man would have had a Gunter's chain among the Indians. We have the course, and can only guess at the distance, or find it out by trial. Suppose we find the spring, we must go 'West 21:15 South, 124 to a square buried stone.' One hundred and twenty four what? That, also, must be guessed at, or discovered by experiment, and then ensues a tedious digging for the buried stone, from which we may be miles away while we are digging for it. If the stone should be found, we are informed that a 'circle of XX strikes cache.' That may mean a circle with a radius of twenty something, and the treasure—if any there is—is concealed somewhere in the circumference of that circle. As for 'dropping a perpendicular below,' I must confess that I am at a loss to understand that direction, unless it may be that one point in the circle may lie on the brink of a precipice, or the edge of a cañon. On the whole, Harry, I think that the buried treasure, as far as finding it is concerned, is about in the situation of the needle in the haystack. I don't want to discourage you, but—"

"I am not at all discouraged, I assure you," quickly answered Harry. "On the contrary, I am now absolutely convinced

that this document is genuine, that there is a buried treasure, and that we can find it, if we go to work in the right way, and use proper perseverance. Besides, Myers, if gold has been found in that region, why may we not find more? If we do not succeed in discovering this treasure, we may make discoveries that will be still more valuable."

"That is possible. What do you propose to do about it?"

"I propose to go there, to set out as soon as possible, and you must accompany me. It is yet early in the season, and we shall find plenty of water. We can take a train of pack-mules, a few good men, and plenty of ammunition, so that we may be able to take care of ourselves."

"I would like nothing better than such an excursion—although I can not help thinking that it is a wild-goose chase—if you will defray the expenses. Will your father allow it, and will he let me off for a season?"

"Never mind the expenses; I will attend to that; and I will engage to make it all right with Colonel Chenault."

"Very well, then; we may consider it settled. Suppose we get some paste and muslin, Harry, and mount this map, so that it will hold together until we are done with it."

CHAPTER II.

A CLAIMANT FOR THE CACHE.

ABOUT a month after the interview related in the last chapter, a long train left a frontier post in Oregon, journeying toward the east. The route it was to travel lay across the Cascade Mountains, around the northern end of the Blue Mountains, and thence wound in a south-easterly direction, crossing the Rocky Mountains at the South Pass. The train was partly composed of traders, trappers and hunters, partly of returning emigrants, partly of adventurers, surveyors and explorers, and was generally a curious collection of various human shades and characters. The train was so large that it was in no danger of being attacked by hostile Indians, and a number of the

persons and families who accompanied it did so for the purpose of securing company and protection.

Among these was a family named Brainard, consisting of a father and two children. Morris Brainard had passed the middle age, but was a healthy, hearty man, strong in mind and body. He had commenced business in the far West as a land-surveyor, but had been a captive among the Indians during several years. After his escape, he applied himself to farming, trading and land-speculations, and in the course of time amassed a competence. Having buried his wife on the Pacific coast, and having, as he thought, sufficient wealth to satisfy the desires of a reasonable man, he was turning his steps toward the East, for the purpose of settling down where his children could enjoy the benefits of civilization, and of bringing his large tracts of Oregon lands into market. For this purpose, he had sold his personal property, and had turned his money into drafts on St. Louis, as being safer and more portable.

John Brainard, his son, was a tall, active and intelligent youth of nineteen, hardy, accustomed to frontier life, and gifted with courage and good common sense. His sister Kate, a year younger, was a slender, handsome, bright-eyed brunette, who had already made considerable havoc among the hearts of the frontiersmen, but who loved only her father and her brother, in whom she believed implicitly.

The family was accompanied by two other persons, one of whom was an Englishman, who acted in the capacity of a servant, and who was inclined to be fat and timorous, qualities that are undesirable in the wilderness. The other was a Canadian half-breed, and an old *voyageur*, whose immense size and strength were only equaled by his great good nature. Although apparently powerful enough to crush an ox, he would not have hurt a fly, unless upon sufficient provocation. He may have had a Christian name, or half a dozen of them, but he was never known by any other designation than *Tête Bois*. He was to accompany the Brainard family as far as the frontier settlements, and the Englishman—named Thomas—expected to continue in their service when they reached “the States.” The party had two covered wagons, well loaded, and a few pack-mules. They were to travel the whole distance on horseback, with the exception of Kate Brainard, who was

expected to rest herself by an occasional ride in one of the wagons.

At the close of the first day's journey, the train halted, for the purpose of preparing the evening meal, and camping for the night. As it was in charge of a skillful and experienced leader, the same precautions were taken that would have been used if already in a hostile country. The wagons were so arranged as to be available for purposes of defense, the horses were turned out to graze, and guards were posted about the camp.

After supper, Morris Brainard requested his son and daughter and the half-breed to accompany him a short distance beyond the camp, where they seated themselves, leaving the Englishman to take care of the fire and the cooking utensils. When the men had lighted their pipes, Mr. Brainard informed them that he had brought them there for the purpose of making an important communication to them.

"At about the close of this month," said he, "as near as I can calculate, we will leave this train, and strike off into the wilderness by ourselves."

"Why is that, father?" asked Kate. "I supposed that you intended to continue with the train until it reached the settlements."

"I would do so, but I have some business to settle, before taking a final leave of this country. I have some property on the other side of the mountains, which I wish to secure, if I can find it, though I must admit that the question of finding it is a doubtful one."

"It must be a curious piece of property, or a very small one, if it is so hard to find," suggested John Brainard.

"It is small in size, but large in amount—a great deal of value in a small compass. In fact, John, it is gold."

"Gold in the wilderness! How in creation did it get there? And how, in the name of wonder, did you find it?"

"Where else should the precious metal be, but in the wilderness? You would not be likely to pick up gold in the streets of the settlements. It was placed there by the hand of the Almighty, in the natural course of creation, and I have no doubt that that whole region of country is rich with it."

"Tell us all about it, father. Why haven't you spoken of it before?"

"I have not wished to excite you unnecessarily, and have thought it best to wait until you were old enough to look at the matter understandingly. I hoped to be able by that time, as I now find myself to be, to return to the East, and expected to stop on my way to pick up my treasure. While you were children, you remember, shortly after I had settled in the Territory, I was taken prisoner by the Indians, with whom I remained a captive during several years.

"It so happened, thanks to Providence, that I was well treated. I made myself useful to my savage captors, and was so much esteemed among them, that I believe I might have been raised, in the course of time, to the dignity of chief. But that was far from my desire; my thoughts were all with my family, who doubtless believed me dead, and the sight of my wife and children would have been worth far more to me than all the honors or favors that the red-skins could possibly have conferred upon me. I tried to persuade the Indians to allow me to leave them, but my entreaties were of no avail, and I was compelled to remain, traveling when they traveled, and stopping when they stopped. While the tribe that held me was sojourning near the base of the mountains, about the head-waters of the Missouri, I was allowed considerable liberty, and occupied myself in making some geological researches, that were very interesting to me, and served to divert my thoughts from my troubles. As I was thus engaged, I perceived some shining particles in the bed of a stream, and was convinced, on close observation, that they were grains of gold. On further investigation, I discovered more of the same metal in the banks of the stream, and in several little water-courses that ran into it. I thought I saw an opportunity to acquire considerable wealth, and resolved to get what I could, hoping to be able to secure it in the future. I made a rough cradle, of willow twigs covered with a skin, and set at work to wash the glittering earth, and collect the dust. As I wished to conduct my operations as secretly as possible, I did not progress very rapidly, but I succeeded, in the course of one season, in accumulating a considerable quantity of the yellow metal, all of which I carefully concealed. As I was pursuing my

explorations, endeavoring to discover a richer deposit, I chanced to lay open a hole, in which some former digger, perhaps a prisoner like myself, had buried a large amount of gold scales and dust, together with a few large nuggets. I was astonished and bewildered when I examined the hoard, and saw what a mine of wealth had fallen to my lot. There was enough to satisfy the desires of any reasonable man; with what I had gathered, there was a fortune in virgin gold. The former owner, doubtless, was long since dead, so that there was no one to object to my appropriating the whole, and the only question was, how should I ever get it to a place in which it would be useful to me and mine. I made a cache, in which I placed the treasure, and concealed it in such a manner that no mortal could ever find it, unless by the merest accident, or unless he possessed a clue that would guide him directly to the spot. Thereafter I thought of nothing but how I should find my way back to civilization, so that I might return with a strong force, and claim my gold. My digging operations had been favorable to me, for the Indians, having seen me washing mud and sand in the stream, had come to the conclusion that I was crazy, and thereafter treated me with more kindness. At last, although they would not give me permission to go, they winked at my escape, which I effected in company with a young Indian who had learned the secret of my gold discoveries. We attempted to cross the mountains in the winter, but were overtaken by a terrible snow-storm, in the course of which we became separated, and I suppose that my companion perished. As for me, I have always wondered how I survived; but I was mercifully preserved, and was found by a party of trappers, who took care of me, and at last brought me to Fort Walla-walla, from which I made my way to the coast, where I found my wife and children, who had long mourned for me as dead. I had saved a small bag of gold-dust, that I had secured about my person, but it was nearly all expended in paying my guides, and in procuring conveyance and provisions from the fort to the coast. I soon saw that it would be useless to attempt to organize a party to go in search of the treasure, for my statements would not have been believed, and, if I had started an expedition, the men who composed it would probably have taken all, and

left me to find my way home as well as I could. Besides, my business increased rapidly, and demanded all my attention; my gains were large and certain, and I could afford to let the treasure remain in its place of concealment, satisfied that it would not be disturbed, and that its value would not be diminished by time."

"That is a long story, father," said John Brainard, "but it is a splendid one—the best I ever heard. It sounds more like a romance than a sober reality; but we will be able to realize it, I suppose, when we find the treasure. I am impatient to get ahead, so that we can open that wonderful cache. I suppose you have the clue that will lead us right to the place?"

"That is the great trouble; I have lost the clue. I made a general map of the locality, and laid down certain courses, with the aid of my pocket-compass, and measured the distances as well as I could, so that I would have no trouble, at any future day, in finding my way to the cache. During the storm in the mountains, however, I lost my map, and was unable to find it in the deep snow; so that I shall be obliged to rely on my recollection of the landmarks, and to search as well as I can. If my eyes should chance to light on the place, I would be sure to recognize it, but I must confess that the undertaking looks to me, at present, much like hunting for a needle in a haystack."

"Never mind, father; there is a chance, and we will make the most of it. That gold will make us rich, and we are bound to have it. We have nothing to fear, except from the Indians."

"I see no good reason to apprehend trouble from them, my son. I am informed that they have nearly deserted that section of country, and if we should meet any straggling bands, I think we would be a match for them. It will be best for Kate, of course, to accompany the train to the settlements, and there wait for us."

"Yes, sir; she will be safe, and out of the way, and will have an opportunity of seeing some of those splendid beaux of the States, about whom she has been dreaming for so long a time."

"I never dream about the young men in the States," retorted Kate, "nor about any other young men, and I don't

intend to be sent off with the train, but will go wherever you go, whether you wish it or not. We shall see whether I shall be more in the way than my lazy brother."

"What do you think of it, Tête Bois?" asked Mr. Brainard. "Shall we hunt for the cache?"

"What you say, I say," answered the taciturn half-breed.

"My mind was made up long ago. You must make good use of your rifles, and we must live on game as much as we can, for we will need all the provisions we can carry."

CHAPTER III.

BURT ADAMS HEARS OF A CACHE.

BURT ADAMS was a backwoodsman of the bandit stripe. Although hardly forty years old, he made it his boast that he had taken more scalps than any Indian he had ever met. Scalps were his great failing; whether he killed a man in battle, or in a quarrel—whether he committed a murder for the sake of gain, or merely to "keep his hand in," he always stripped off the scalp of his victim, and cut a cross on the forehead with his sharp knife, which was known as Burt Adams' mark. He had a small, eight-cornered tally-stick, made of hard wood, in one end of which was inserted a whistle, and on that tally-stick he notched down, as he took them, every scalp, because it was too much trouble to carry them about with him. He never had a scalp-dance over his trophies, and never bragged about them as the Indians do, but he took a fiendish pleasure in pointing to the notches on his tally-stick, and in counting them. He had one notch for every year in his life, and a few to spare, and you may be sure that the record was correct, for Burt Adams was a man of his word, except when it suited his purpose to lie. Woe to the luckless Shoshonic, or Digger Indian, who chanced to cross his path when he was hungry for a scalp. All were fish to his net, and the dirty patch of straight hair would soon be hanging at his belt.

Love of money was another of his failings. He would dare or do any thing to get possession of the root of all evil, though he squandered it as soon as he got it, and it had led him into many scrapes from which his dexterity or brute force had invariably extricated him. In the pursuit of gain, he had been a pickpocket and burglar in St. Louis, a horse-thief in Missouri, an honest trapper—though he soon tired of that—in the mountains, a “regulator” and murderer in Texas, a highway-robber and bandit in Mexico, and an associate of the most cruel and villainous Indians on the plains. It was said that he had despoiled a church in California, and that he had murdered and robbed a comrade with whom he had trapped during several years—an offense which has no parallel in the estimation of a frontiersman. However that may have been, it is certain that his ill-gotten gains were of no permanent benefit to him; he had been tacitly outlawed by all the white men who roved the plains; and he found himself, at the time of which we are speaking, one of a marauding and migratory band of Crow Indians, among whom his reputation for cruelty caused him to be feared, and his known courage and ability caused him to be respected. He was not a tall man, but was powerfully built, and generally dressed and looked like an Indian. His only arms were a rifle, a long and heavy two-edged knife, and a hunting-knife. His forehead was low and wrinkled, his eyes were small and piercing, his nose was long and curved, his hair and beard were long and black, and the expression of his countenance was a compound of the resolute, the crafty, the cruel, the reckless and the defiant.

Burt Adams was squatted under a tree, near a small Indian encampment, a little east of the Rocky Mountains. In the shade of the same tree, stretched on a blanket, lay an old Indian, apparently a chief, whose earthly end was evidently not far off. The red-man was breathing with difficulty, and the outlawed white man was watching him as unconcernedly as if one Indian more or less in the world was not a matter of the slightest consequence to him.

“Mus-to-qua will soon die,” said the old chief. “He will not see the sun set again, for the Great Spirit calls him, and he must go to the hunting-grounds where the sun never rises and never sets. He is not sorry to go, for his wives have

gone, his sons have been slain, and few of his people are left. Will the Big Knife see that Mus-to-qua is buried in his war-paint, with his bow and arrows and his gun, and that his horse and his dogs are killed upon his grave?"

"I reckon I ken do that much fur ye, ole hoss," answered Adams, "'specially as the animule is purty near no 'count."

"Will the Big Knife remain with my people, and lead them against the whites, that they may revenge the death of my sons, and fill their lodges with scalps?"

"I don't adzackly like to say all that, 'cause I don't want to make no promises that I mought not kerry out. I ken say, though, ole chief, that I'll stick to 'em as long as I ken make it pay."

"Does the Big Knife want money? Does he wish for gold?"

"Ye ken jest bet all yer blankets and beads that I want that very thing, ole hoss."

"The Big Knife shall have money—he shall have gold—a great pile—if he will do as I ask, and remain with my people."

"That suits this chile, Mus-to-qua. Ladle out the stuff, and Burt Adams will stick to yer folks like a snappin'-turtle to a willer stick."

"The gold is in a cache, far from here, and it is hard to find."

"Don't car' a cuss whar' it is. Jest put me on the trail so's I ken find it, and I'll do what I said."

"Many years ago we took a prisoner—a white man. We did not kill him, but kept him with us, for he was useful, and taught us many things. After a while, the Great Spirit took his mind from him, as we thought, for he would do nothing but dig the mud and the sand by the side of the rivers, and wash it through his fingers in the water. My people laughed and let him alone, but I watched him, and saw him pick out the shining bits of sand, and carry them, at the close of the day, to a cache that he had made. I caught him as he was hiding them, and asked him what he was doing. Then he was crazy indeed, for he turned upon me with wild eyes and foaming mouth, and tried to kill me. He had nearly choked the breath out of me, when I drew my knife and stabbed him until he was dead."

"Did ye raise his ha'r?"

"I buried him there in the sand. Then I looked in his cache, and saw a great pile of shining gold, so much that I could not have lifted it. I placed the stone over the cache again, and left it, for the gold was of no use to me. It is there yet, for no one can have found it, and the Big Knife shall have it all, if he will stay with my people."

"I'm slow to make barg'ins, Mus-to-qua, but I allers stick to 'em, when they're made. Jest put me on the trail of the yaller stuff, and I'll foller it up ontil I find the cache."

"Does the Big Knife remember where we camped last summer, where we hid from the white men—in the valley by the little river—where there was a narrow, rocky cañon—where one of my young men fell into a deep hole, and was never seen again?"

"I jest do, hoss, 'cause I come mighty nigh gittin' into the same scrape myself."

"There is a shattered pine tree, all bare and white, standing alone near that deep hole. Beyond it, within half an arrow's flight, is a tall, sharp stone. As you look from the tree to the stone, the line crosses the stream. Follow that line, and you will find the cache. It is just under the bank of the stream, and is covered by a smooth, round stone. It is a small stone, but there is no other like it, and under it is a deep hole, plastered with mud, and the hole is full of the shining gold for which white men go crazy."

"Thar's no danger that this chile will go crazy on that sub-
ject. I allow to be jest about as fond of gold as any man, but it's no good ef a feller hain't got the mind to know how to use it. Your directions are easy enough to foller, Mus-to-
qua, and I make no doubt that I ken walk straight to that cache. Ef I'm to stick to your folks, ole hoss, I reckon they mought as well onderstand that they've got to stick to me."

The old chief beckoned to a warrior who was passing. The red-man approached, and sat down by the blanket.

"I am going to leave you," said Mus-to-qua. "I am going to my fathers, in the far hunting-grounds, where no white man will come to drive off the buffalo. But I will leave a good man with you. The Big Knife has promised to stay among

you, to lead you against your enemies, and to fill your lodges with scalps."

"When it comes to skelpin'," interrupted Burt, "it may be allowed that I'm thar'."

"He will stay with you, and will lead you, but you must obey him. Will you promise me, for my people, that they will do so?"

The warrior was silent, but bowed his head as a token of assent.

Mus-to-qua took from his breast a ring, that was suspended from his neck by a leather cord, and handed it to Adams. It was a heavy gold ring, and was set with a red stone that was curiously carved.

"I took this," said he, "from the hand of the man whom I killed, from the hand of the white man who buried the gold in the cache. Let the Big Knife take it; for it is his, and it will tell my people that he stands in my place when I am gone."

"Thank ye," said Adams, as he examined the ring, and tried it on his bony fingers. "It would be wuth suthin' in the settlements, and I don't object to keepin' it. Hello, what's the matter with the chief?"

Mus-to-qua's head fell back, there was a rattle in his throat, his lower jaw dropped, and his eyes glazed—he was dead.

"Reckon ye'd better call some of yer women to tend to him," said Adams, as he sauntered away.

"It can't be that the Injin was lyin'," he muttered. "A tall, sharp stone, in a line with a barked pine, and a round stone under the bank—I must remember that, fur the thing is wuth tryin'."

CHAPTER IV.

THE HAYSTACK—WHERE IS THE NEEDLE?

"I THINK this must be the spot, Harry, or near it, for we are just above the forks of the river, and I suppose we may as well strike camp. What do you say, Ben Farrar?"

"Didn't think you were so green, Mr. Myers. Accordin'

to rule, you must never camp on the side of the river whar' you find yourself at night."

"That is true; I had forgotten. We must lose no time in crossing, for it is getting late, and I am both hungry and tired."

The scene was a glorious one. The party, with their little train, had wound their way over the broad and rolling prairie, dotted here and there with islands or groves of timber, until they had reached a river, the banks of which were lined with cottonwoods and willows. Before them, on the opposite side of the river, stretched out the same rolling prairie, gradually breaking into gullies and ridges, which soon became more rugged and mountainous, until they blended with the immense masses of the Rocky range. Behind that vast and seemingly impassable barrier between the Atlantic and Pacific slopes, the sun was setting, tinting the clouds with rose-red and gold, and shedding over the prairie a strange luster, that added brilliancy to the many-hued flowers sparkling among the green and luxuriant grass. It added, too, a deeper color to the yellow surface of the river, which was swollen by a recent freshet, and rushed on its way to the far distant ocean with a rapid and muddy current.

The party consisted of Harry Chenault, Sam Myers, and two experienced hunters, named Ben Farrar and Pete Green. They were mounted, and were accompanied by two loaded wagons, drawn by horses. It was near dusk when they reached the river, and found that it presented quite a formidable obstacle to their further progress, for it was fully ten rods wide, and more than ten feet deep at that time. It was the difficulty of making the crossing that had caused Myers to suggest that the camp should be struck where they were.

"It is very easy to talk about camping on the other side of the river," said Harry, "but I would like to know how you propose to get over there."

"It will take time," answered Farrar, "but it is not a very hard thing to do, and we will have a moon. Horses can swim by natur', and I reckon one of us can swim well enough to carry a line across."

"I am the man for that job," said Myers; "I could swim as soon as I could talk plain."

" You may hitch together a couple of lariats then, and take an end across the river, and make it fast thar', a little way down-stream, about as fur as you think the hosses would be carried by the current. We will soon swim them over."

" It is easy enough to get the horses across, but what will you do with the loaded wagons?" asked Harry.

" We will find a way to float them over, sir. Jump in, Mr. Myers, fur we must hurry, ef we want to git in camp afore we lose the moon."

Myers stripped and leaped into the stream, with the end of a lariat tied around his body, and soon reached the other side, landing at a point a short distance below his comrades. The horses were then unhitched, and Farrar fastened an end of the lariat around the neck of one of the gentlest, from whose tail another line reached to the neck of another, and so on, until all were connected. It was not necessary to cut a passage to the water for them, as the river was high and almost level with the banks. The foremost horse was driven in, and the others followed, Myers guiding them by pulling at his end of the lariat. They were carried by the current to the point at which he was stationed, and when the leader got up on the bank, it drew the others after it, assisting them to land. Thus the horses were safely crossed and tied where they could graze, and Farrar turned his attention to the wagons.

Taking off the canvas covers, he laid them on the ground, and placed one of the wagon-beds in the center of each. Then he brought the cloths up around the ends and sides, and secured them firmly with ropes tied around transversely, and another rope fastened lengthwise under the rim. The wagon-beds were then launched, and, although the canvas leaked considerably at first, it soon swelled until it was nearly watertight, and Harry was surprised to see that two available boats had been improvised.

The boats were then placed on the lower side of the lariat, which was drawn tight and firmly lashed to a tree, and Myers swam over to assist at the ferry. Each boat was loaded with a portion of the provisions and "plunder" of the party, and was pulled across the stream, alongside of the lariat, by two men. When their freight was taken out, they were sent back for more, until every thing was brought over. The wheels and

the other parts of the wagons formed the last loads, and the last boat brought over the end of the line.

Thus they had an unfordable river behind them, and were secure from attack in that direction. They did not know what enemies the wilderness before them might contain, but it was not probable that many Indians were in that region at that season.

Indians or no Indians, it mattered little to Harry Chenault and his friends, who proceeded to arrange their camp and prepare their supper, as calmly as if they were safe in the settlements. The two trappers were accustomed to the presence of danger, and Harry and Myers were too much occupied with the novelty of their adventure, to trouble themselves about unseen foes.

After they had finished a hearty meal, the inevitable pipes were produced, and Chenault and Myers sat down to examine their map, while the hunters kept watch and busied themselves about the camp. The map had been carefully pasted on muslin, and its lines, as well as the directions below, had been retouched with ink, so that it was quite plain and in a good state of preservation.

"This must be the spot, or very near it, that is laid down in the map as the point of beginning," said Myers. "Here the river forks—the last fork, as Farrar says—and yonder, to the westward and southward, you see the mountains."

"That is true," answered Harry, "and I feel certain that we must be in the right place, as it seems to correspond with the map. It may be, however, that some smaller stream, near some other mountains, is intended, and we may be thousands of miles from the spot we wish to find."

"That is possible, my boy, but, if the story told by your old trapper is true, it is hardly probable. If the white man was a captive among the Crows, he must have been in this region quite frequently. Besides, we are in nearly a north-west direction from three peaks, such as are shown in the map."

"It seems that we must be right, and all we have to do is to go ahead. If we are sure of our starting-point, the next thing is to find the spring."

"Yes; we must go, as the directions say, west, forty, to spring, and the great question is, forty what? That we can

only ascertain by experiment, and we must postpone our experiments until morning. As we can do nothing more at present, we had better go to sleep, so that we will be ready for work to-morrow."

The important map was rolled up, and the two young men rolled themselves up in their blankets, and were soon lost in slumber, leaving Farrar and Green to keep watch alternately.

In the morning they were up quite as early as the sun was, for life on the prairie is not favorable to late rising, and soon commenced their operations, which appeared very mysterious to Farrar and Green, who had not been initiated into the secret of the hidden treasure.

With a pocket-compass and a Gunter's chain, they measured forty chains due west, and then carefully examined a line, at that distance from the river, and parallel with it for more than a mile, north and south, but they saw no spring nor any indication of one. Returning to the camp, they measured forty rods in the same manner, and made a similar examination along another line; but there was no sign of a spring. In order to be fully satisfied, they mounted their horses, and rode around the country, within a half-circuit of four or five miles, examining the ground attentively, and traversing it in every direction; still, there was no spring, nothing but the rolling prairie, a few scattered belts and clumps of timber, and two little water-courses, neither of which had its rise in a spring.

Completely tired out, greatly disappointed, and almost disheartened, they returned to camp, in quite a bad humor. They again unrolled the map, and studied it carefully, but without eliciting any thing new. In fact, the more they studied it, the more disgusted they became with themselves and their search.

"I suppose our wonder is at an end now," said Harry Chennault, peevishly throwing the paper aside. "We need not bother ourselves any more to guess whether that figure 40 means forty feet, forty chains, forty rods, forty furlongs, or forty miles, for we have tried every measure we know of, and have not smelt a spring. Either we have hit upon the wrong point of beginning, or the map is nothing but a humbug."

"So it seems, my boy; but I am surprised that you, who

were so earnest in the undertaking, and who have been so sanguine until to-day, should be so easily discouraged at the first failure. For my part, I confess that I am disappointed, but I am not inclined to give up the search. We have come too far to be turned back by a little hindrance."

"A little hindrance! Do you know what you are saying, Sam Myers? If a man is knocked down, he may as well confess the fall, for no amount of argument can convince him that he has not been hit. If he starts to go to a certain point, and finds his way blocked up, at the outset, by an impassable barrier, it is useless to try to argue it away, and he had better turn back."

"It is possible, Harry, that we are neither knocked down nor stopped by an insurmountable barrier. If we hunt for a needle in a haystack, we must not expect to prick our fingers with it when we turn over the first handful of hay."

"But we find the haystack locked up, and can not even find the way to get to it. If this is not the real place of beginning, we are all wrong, and where in the wide West shall we look for it?"

"If this is not the point that is indicated on the map by a star, I confess that I can not even imagine where it is. It is my belief that we are at or near the proper starting-point, that causes me to think that we have not yet exhausted our resources."

"What resources are left to us? We have tried every thing."

"We have tried forty chains, forty rods, and other measures, but have not yet tried forty miles."

"Forty miles! I half believe, Myers, that you are taking leave of your senses. Forty miles due west to find a little spring! That would be hunting for a needle in a haystack with a vengeance."

"You must remember that we started for the purpose of finding a needle in a haystack."

"Do you suppose, Sam Myers, that any man, if he had a valuable cache in these wilds, and wished to preserve the clue to it, would fix his starting-point at a place forty miles from anywhere near it?"

"Why not? St. Louis was our starting-point. There must,

of course, be some permanent and ascertainable landmark, from which the clue can be taken up."

"I don't see what that has to do with it, and am bound to say that I am losing interest in the affair."

The conversation was interrupted by the approach of Ben Farrar, who had been witnessing the proceedings of the two young men during the day, with great curiosity, and who had observed their moody countenances and disappointed looks when they returned to the camp.

"I reckon you two had a big tramp to-day," said he.

"Indeed we have, Ben," answered Harry Chenault; "we have tired ourselves out, and all for nothing."

"I jist wonder, now, if I mought ask, whar' ye've been, and what ye've been huntin' fur."

"We have been some four or five miles about here, and have been hunting for nothing but a spring, that is somewhere in these parts, as we have been told."

"Ye may well say that ye've had yer tramp fur nothin', 'cause thar's no sign of a spring anywhar' about here, if my old eyes and smeller are good for any thin'."

"We may as well give it up, Myers, and get out of this scrape while we can do so with some degree of credit."

"Ef ye want to see a spring," continued the hunter, "thar's lots of them over toward the mountains, and one real handsome one that's well worth seein'."

"How far is it from here, and in what direction?" asked Myers.

"Right toward the sunset, and some forty or fifty miles from here, as I reckon."

"Forty miles!" exclaimed Harry Chenault, starting up, his face again animated, and his eyes flashing once more. "By Jove! Myers, you are right! We are on the trail again, and have nothing to do but to follow it up."

"The prospect begins to brighten," answered Myers. "West forty, to spring. That seems very much like our course and distance. Can you guide us to that spring, Ben?"

"Sart'in I ken, provided the sun keeps settin' in the same place. What in thunder are ye so bent on huntin' up that spring fur?"

"We want to make a survey, and that is the point we start from."

"Hope ye ain't goin' to cut up the land about here, when thar's so much lyin' 'round loose nigher the settlements. The game and the furs ain't a bit thicker than they ort to be, anyhow."

"There is no danger that we will trouble the land, or drive off the game. Let us get some supper inside of us, take a good sleep, and be ready for an early start in the morning."

CHAPTER V.

THE SEARCH CONTINUED.

EARLY the next morning Harry Chenault and his party broke camp, and set out, traveling due west by the compass, to seek the spring, which might, or might not, be that which was mentioned in the directions accompanying their mysterious map. The two young gentlemen were elated, and almost hilarious, at the new prospect of discovering the concealed treasure, and their companions, although they were not inquisitive, had lost none of their curiosity, as they did not believe that Harry and Myers had journeyed to that remote region merely for the purpose of surveying a piece of valueless land in the very heart of the wilderness.

Before they had gone far, the pleasant and rolling prairie gradually became merged into rough, rocky and difficult ground, obstructed by precipitous ridges and seamed by deep gullies and gulches. It was no longer possible to proceed in the due westerly course prescribed by the map and indicated by the compass, as they were continually compelled to make *détours*, in order to avoid the numerous obstructions in their way. However, they noticed that their general bearing was toward the west, and were confident of Farrar's ability to guide them to the spring of which he had spoken. Besides, Myers had ascertained the latitude and longitude of the point on the river from which they had started, and felt that he would be

able to speak with some certainty after making further observations at the spring.

Owing to the great difficulty of hauling the teams, and the circuitous routes by which they were obliged to travel, it was not until near the close of the fourth day after leaving the river, that they arrived at a little eminence, where Farrar halted the party, and pointed to a pleasant valley in the plain below them, near which, as he said, the spring would be found.

Harry Chenault and his friend eagerly spurred their horses, and hastened down, to find a scene that was a perfect paradise, in contrast with the rough region over which they had passed. The plain, where the tall and waving grass reached to their saddles, was spotted, like a park, with beautiful oak, ash, elm and sycamore trees; before them, at no great distance, towered the dark and precipitous declivities of the Rocky Mountains, snow-covered, even at that season; and behind them stretched the rugged region that they had traversed so wearily. In the midst of the plain was a spring of water, as clear as crystal, that boiled up out of the ground, to the height of about three feet, and fell back, with a musical splashing, into the rocky basin, from which it glided away, a dancing, laughing rivulet, through the shady and beautiful valley at the left.

Harry leaped from his horse and thrust his head into the sparkling fountain. The water was as cold as ice, and he drank with an exclamation of delight.

"This is the spot!" he shouted, tossing up his hat, and throwing himself on the soft grass. "If we had found nothing but this, it would be worth coming to see. This is the water of health, the fountain of eternal youth, Myers, and we only need the philosopher's stone to make the place perfect. With health all around us, and boundless wealth in prospect, what more can we wish or hope for?"

"You are enthusiastic again," said Myers, as he alighted. "I trust that your cheerful and hopeful mood may continue, for we are only getting into the haystack, and have not found the needle yet. I declare, my boy, after drinking this water, I feel almost as jubilant and enthusiastic as yourself. Cowper might well have set up here the lodge in the vast

wilderness that he asked for, if there was no danger of being molested by Indians."

The young gentlemen were disturbed in their pleasant fancies, and recalled to the realities of life, by the arrival of their guides with the train.

"Wa-al, Mr. Chenault, what do you think of this spring?" asked Farrar. "I knew it was here, and I knew I could bring ye to it, as straight as the lay of the land would let us go. Ef ye want to lay out a town, or a farm, thar' ain't no purtier piece of land lyin' out of doors, but I reckon it would be a long time afore ye could git any white folks to come out here and settle."

"It is glorious," replied Harry. "I never saw any thing like it. You need have no fear that we will deface this beautiful spot with a town, or even with a farm. I wish I could own it a hundred years hence. As sure as I live, the brook is full of trout. Did you see that big fellow jump, Ben?"

"Ya-as, thar's plenty of fish, Mr. Chenault, an' we ken live on 'em, fur a change, ef ye allow to stay here a while. Speakin' of stayin' reminds me that we had better strike camp."

"Yes, Ben, in that shady valley, by the side of the brook."

"Not much, sir; this is a tol'abul skeary bit of country, I take it, an' ef we were down thar' the red imps would hev' too good a chance to sneak up on us, ef they should happen around this way. We had better camp in the bunch of timber on the knoll yonder, so that we ken hev' a clear view and a fair fight, ef it must come to that."

"Very well; let us hurry up and strike camp, for I am as hungry as a Digger Indian in December."

The wagons were taken to the knoll that Farrar had pointed out, and a camp was soon prepared and partially fortified. The horses were turned out to graze, until night should fairly set in, and the next thing in order was supper, for which all were clamorous.

While the camp was being prepared, Myers, who was quite an expert angler, had hastily arranged his fishing-tackle, and soon drew out on the grass a number of fine, glossy, speckled trout, which, cooked in hunters' style, formed a welcome addition to their repast. After supper came the usual pipes and

conversation, and then all, except Green, who had the first watch, laid down to sleep.

In the morning Harry Chenault was more impatient than ever, and hurried through his breakfast, in order to continue the search for the concealed treasure, with the spring as a starting-point. But he was restrained by Myers, who reminded him of the old proverb: "Be sure you are right, and then go ahead."

"At noon," said the cool-headed surveyor, "I will take an observation, and then will be able to determine whether we are now due west from our point of beginning on the river, and whether we have come forty miles from that point. If the course and the distance prove to be correct, we will know that we have hit upon the spring, and can tell what to do. It is useless to bustle about in the haystack in search of our needle, when we can easily discover whether we are on the right track or not."

As this was manifestly a sensible view of the question, Harry agreed to it, and amused himself with fishing, while Green went after game, and Myers and Farrar occupied themselves in cutting down trees and strengthening the fortifications at the camp.

When the sun crossed the meridian, Myers squinted at it with his quadrant, greatly to the amusement of Farrar, and made some rapid calculations on a bit of paper. Soon he jumped up, and hugged Harry, in an ecstasy of delight.

"We've found it! we've found it!" he exclaimed. "Ben Farrar, you are a trump, and you shall have the best rifle that can be bought in St. Louis. This is the spring, Harry, my boy; we are in nearly the same latitude as the point on the river; and though the distance is a little under forty miles, as near as I can calculate it, it makes no difference, for we have traveled further than that to get here."

"Come on, then!" exclaimed Harry, equally enthusiastic. "As we are sure we are right, all we have to do is to go ahead."

"Not quite yet. Suppose we cool down, and ly in a good supply of dinner, and then we will commence in earnest."

After the something to eat was had, pipes were brought out, as a matter of course, and the young gentlemen moderated

their transports, under the soothing fumes of the weed. They came to the conclusion that the needle was not yet found, and that considerable searching would be necessary, before that diminutive article could be discovered. Consequently, they went to work more calmly, more methodically, and with better judgment.

Proceeding to the fountain, they first quaffed a brimming bumper of its liquid coolness, drinking success to their enterprise, and then commenced to measure 124 chains, in the direction west 21 degrees 15 minutes south. They got along very well, keeping the course as exactly as possible, until the line ran into a dense thicket of trees, bushes and tangled vines, when Harry, who carried the further end of the chain, was obliged to use ax and knife to clear his way. Still he persevered, although it was slow work, until he suddenly uttered a cry, and rushed back out of the thicket. His face was as white as a sheet, although he was undoubtedly as brave as a man ought to be.

"For God's sake, Myers," he exclaimed, "come here quickly!"

Myers sprung forward, and his friend led him carefully through the thicket, to the edge of a frightful chasm or cañon, about twenty feet wide, dark, and apparently unfathomable. The edges, on each side, were so overhung by trees and bushes, that the chasm was completely concealed, and the eye would not be likely to notice it, until the foot was in it. It was not unfathomable, however, for the sound of running water could be heard, seemingly at a great distance below.

"I had nearly fallen in there," said Harry, in a low and husky tone. "I was walking backward, dragging the chain, when I was almost over the edge, before I knew where I was. My mangled form would now be lying at the bottom of the chasm, if the chain had not been entangled with a stump, so that I was able to draw myself back. When I looked around, and saw what danger I had been in, I must confess that my knees sunk under me, and I was too paralyzed to move."

"It was a providential escape," answered Myers. "Who would have thought that such a place was concealed in that thicket!"

"Who, indeed! It is the devil's own trap, but I shall know how to avoid it hereafter. There is one thing certain, Sam Myers, we are stumped again, for we are not at the end of our 124 chains, and it is not likely that any man has ever measured across that chasm. Are you sure that we ran the right course?"

"There can be no doubt of it; I ought to know my business well enough for that; but it by no means follows that we are stumped. It is plain that neither 124 chains, nor 124 rods, is the measure, and the next thing is, to try 124 feet. We had our measure too small when we were searching for the spring, and now it is probable that we have made it too large."

"That is a fact, Myers; it is a physical impossibility that the directions should send us 124 miles to search for a square buried stone, and it seems equally impossible that they should send us across that yawning gulf. We must take a fresh start."

The two friends returned to the spring, and measured, with a tape-line, 124 feet in the same course that had so nearly led Harry into the ravine. Having planted a peg at the point reached by this measurement, they proceeded, with spades and pickaxes, to dig for the stone.

After laboring nearly an hour, unsuccessfully turning up the earth at and about the peg, they rested, and looked at each other quite dismally.

"It's no use talking," said Myers; "the haystack is too large, and the needle is too small. It seems that we have got to the end of our tether, for there is no square buried stone about here."

"That much is certain," answered Harry, "and we must either torture our brains for some new experiment, or give up the job."

Their proceedings had been watched by Ben Farrar, who, when he could no longer control his curiosity, left the camp in the charge of Green, and came down to investigate the mysterious measuring and digging.

"I jest would like to know," said he, "what you two are tryin' to do. Thar's a medicine about here that this beaver ain't up to, and I hope it's nothin' ag'in what's right. Perhaps I mought help ye, bein' as I found the spring for ye."

"The fact is," said Harry, "we are looking for a square stone that is buried somewhere hereabout."

"Thun-der-ation! Couldn't ye hev' found plenty of those in St. Louis? I begin to think that you two have gone crazy, or Satan himself has got after ye. Fust it was the forks of a river, next it was a spring, and now it is a square stun', buried in the ground. The next thing, I reckon, will be the jumpin'-off place."

"I have found that," interrupted Harry.

"To think of comin' all the way out here, nigh the edge of the mountings, to hunt a square stun' in the ground. Ye mought as well try to find a silver dollar that some one had lost between Westport and Laramie."

"I am much of your opinion, but am not inclined to give up the search. Sam Myers, I have an idea."

"Ideas are wanted now. What is it?"

"Suppose our measure should be 124 paces. It is not likely that the man who made the map had a tape-line. We can easily step off the distance, and try it."

"We will do so. We will all go to the spring, and I will step off 124 paces, on the line we have run, and will leave a mark where I end, and then you two will do likewise. Thus neither of us will be likely to follow exactly in the steps of the other, and the average of the three results ought to be about correct."

The plan was carried out as proposed, and Myers stepped off the distance, followed by Harry Chenault and Farrar. The distance measured brought them into the edge of the thicket, not far from the deep cañon, and, as there was but little difference in the measurements, they took their axes, and commenced to clear away the brush, preparatory to digging.

"Thar's no need of huntin' any more, boys," said Ben Farrar, pushing aside some leaves and grass with his feet, "fur I reckon this yere's the stun' ye want."

The young gentlemen knelt down, and eagerly examined the spot at which the hunter pointed. Sure enough, there was a stone, about six inches square, imbedded in the soil, its top level with the earth, and a small cross marked in the middle of it!

"That is the very stone!" exclaimed Harry. "Will you laugh at us any more, Ben Farrar?"

"The stun' was marked and put thar' by somebody, that's sartin; but how in thunder did you trail it, all the way from St. Louis to the mountings?"

"By your help, of course. Come, Myers, we are nearly out of the woods now. Shall we go ahead and finish the job?"

"We would hardly have time to do any thing more. I am tired and hungry, and it is getting late."

"Very well; I believe we have glory enough for one day; we will pick up the tools, and go to the camp and get supper."

CHAPTER VI.

FIGHTING THEIR WAY.

A FEW days after passing the Blue Mountains, Morris Brainard and his party left the train with which they had been traveling, and struck off toward the east, following the course of the north fork of the Lewis River. In vain the danger to be apprehended from roving bands of Indians, the difficulties to be encountered in crossing the mountains, and the numerous other perils attending such an expedition, were represented to him; he had an object in view, and would allow nothing to hinder him from accomplishing it. The season was excellent for traveling, and both Mr. Brainard and Tête Bois were sure that they knew a pass by which they could reach the other side of the mountains, by using proper care and exertion. As for Indians, they were experienced in the ways and warfare of the red-men, and trusted to their own caution, their excellent weapons, and their skill as marksmen, feeling confident that they could not be defeated, unless they should be surprised, or attacked by greatly superior numbers.

Kate Brainard accompanied them, as she resolutely avowed that she would not be separated from her father and brother but would share their perils, their labors, and their fatigues,

whatever they might be. As she had always been accustomed to have her own way, she succeeded in carrying out her intention in this instance, in spite of the remonstrances of all. She considered herself rather an addition to the party, than an incumbrance, for she was quite a good shot with a rifle, and knew how to use a revolver.

The only timorous person was Thomas, the Englishman, who protested against the expedition, and complained that he would certainly be killed in that *hawful* country, *hamong* those 'orrid *hInjins*. As he was only laughed at, and as he was greatly attached to Mr. Brainard, he manfully strove to conquer his fears, and set out with the little party as cheerfully as he could.

Traveling through the beautiful valley of the river, they met with no serious hindrance, until they approached the head-waters of the Fork. They had encountered a few bands of friendly Indians, such as Baunecks and Shoshonies, but had not been in any way molested. They had journeyed at a good rate of speed, and had chiefly subsisted upon game and fish, so that they were able to husband their stores of provisions.

It was near evening, and the heights of the great mountains towered up before them, as if to oppose their further progress, when Tête Bois, who had been riding ahead of the party, for the purpose of selecting a suitable camping-ground, came galloping back, and announced that he had discovered a trail.

"Well, Tête Bois, what do you make of it?" asked Mr. Brainard. "Are they Indians, or white men?"

"Injins—war-party—no lodge-poles."

"That looks bad. Are there many of them?"

"Say thirty—say forty—say fifty," answered the half-breed.

"Enough to demolish us, certainly, if they can get hold of us. How long since they passed?"

"Not long—since morning. S'pose they wait at pass near the river—trail runs that way."

"Then we will not run that way, Tête Bois, we must circumvent those scoundrels, and find a camping-ground where we can give them the right kind of a reception, if they want to attack us."

"Not go through pass—go in water. Tête Bois find a place."

Under the directions of the half-breed, the wagons were turned aside to the river, and the journey was continued over the stony bed of the shallow stream. Thus the party passed the dangerous spot where the Indians were supposed to be lying in wait for them, and the tracks of the wagons and horses were obliterated by the washing of the current, leaving it doubtful to a pursuer, whether they had crossed the river, or ascended it.

When they reached a bluff that was available for defensive purposes, they concealed the wagons and horses within a small ravine that led down to the river, and ascended the bank, where they found themselves in a position well calculated for observation of the country, and for repelling an attack. After making a slight fortification of stones, logs and brush, they ate their supper, and then Tête Bois and John Brainard kept watch, while the others took their rest.

As they were not disturbed during the night, they concluded that the Indians were patiently waiting for them at the pass through which they were expected to come. When morning arrived, it seemed that the red-skins had grown tired of waiting, and had sent out scouts to ascertain what had become of their prey, for yelling Indians could be seen in the river below them, and on the opposite side, searching for a trail which they could not find. After a while, the entire body was scattered over the plain, and on each side of the stream, seeking the trail that had been so cleverly hid from them. Some passed near the bluff on which Morris Brainard and his party had established themselves, and it was evident, from their yells and excited gesticulations, that they were highly indignant, and determined that the whites should not slip through their hands so easily.

When these proceedings had been conducted for some time, Mr. Brainard proposed a demonstration.

"It is useless," said he, "to remain here without doing any thing. The red rascals will find us out before long, and they might as well know our whereabouts sooner as later. We are bound to have a fight before we can get rid of them, and we could hardly find a better ground for fighting. Let us

get up plenty of water, so that we can stand a siege, if necessary, and then we will show ourselves.

All the buckets were filled with water and brought up on the bluff, and then John Brainard, climbing a stout sapling, fastened a red hankerchief to its top as a flag and gave vent to a hurrah, which was answered by cheers from his friends and yells from the savages.

When the attention of the Indians was directed to the bluff, they gathered together in a body, beyond rifle range, and appeared to be holding a consultation.

"I believe they are Crows, Tête Bois," said Mr. Brainard, as he handed his small spy-glass to the half-breed. "If they are, perhaps it might be worth while for me to have a talk with them."

"Not much—white man for chief. *Mille tonnerres!*—Burt Adams!"

"Are you sure? If that cut-throat is leading them, they mean fight, and must have it. Cold lead is the only argument we can apply to them. Here they come! Be ready with your rifles, boys! Kate, lie down behind the barricades, and keep out of the way."

"I am lying down, father," answered the girl, as she rested a rifle on a log before her, and glanced along the barrel.

The Indians came on in their usual style, galloping at full speed, yelling like demons, brandishing their weapons, and occasionally sending a volley of arrows or musket-shots into the clump of trees that surmounted the bluff. No notice was taken of these warlike demonstrations, until they came within easy range, when all the rifles, including Kate's, were discharged simultaneously, the effect upon the savages being to convince them that they had better proceed more cautiously.

Accordingly, they retreated, dismounted, and worked their way toward the rude fortress by careful and zigzag approaches, availing themselves of such cover as they could obtain from trees, gullies and hillocks. The rifles of the whites were busy in attempting to pick them off as they advanced, but they did not do much damage, and the greater part of the savages safely reached the foot of the hill, where they were comparatively well sheltered from the fire of those above.

"Don't fire another shot," ordered Brainard, "but be ready

with your pistols and knives, for they are going to make a grand rush up the hill."

His caution was given none too soon ; there was a wild yell, and the assaulting party swarmed up the steep slope, fully determined to carry the position by storm. Their fierce cries and painted faces were enough to terrify persons of weak nerves ; they rose from behind this little barricade as the enemy had nearly reached it, each calmly picked out his man, and every rifle told with deadly effect. Still the Indians poured on, and there was a desperate struggle for the possession of the barricade. With pistols, knives, and clubbed rifles, the white men, having the vantage-ground, fought with coolness and valor, and the prodigious strength of Tête Bois was shown with great effect, as he picked up large fragments of stone, and hurled them in the faces of their dusky antagonists.

The struggle was short and decisive ; the savages were soon hurled back down the hill, and its defenders had time to take breath and reload. But their rest was brief ; dark forms began to creep up the side of the hill, and it was manifest that the savages were making some new attempt, the nature of which could not be determined. While the men were watching the skulkers below them, and wondering what they were trying to do, a slight scream from Kate, and the discharge of her pistol, settled the question.

Tête Bois rushed to the left, where she had stationed herself, and saw an Indian falling before her shot, while another rushed upon her with uplifted knife. The half-breed raised his foot, dealt the savage a crushing kick in the stomach, and seizing another by the back of his neck and his waistband, hurled him over the edge of the bluff into the river, Kate, in the mean time, sending a shot after a third who was making off as fast as he could.

As this was a concerted attack, the skulkers on the side of the hill rushed up to the barricade, but were too late, for the diversion on the left had already failed, and they met the same determined resistance that the previous assault had received. They hastened to withdraw out of rifle-shot, and the besieged again had time to prepare their weapons and count their casualties. These were few and unimportant : Tête Bois had received a few scratches, Kate Brainard was severely wounded

in her straw hat by an arrow that had carried away one of her curls—though it was hardly missed—and the Englishman had a black eye, caused by the wind and graze of a ball. He had behaved unexpectedly well during the action, and was highly complimented, but received the compliments with a rueful countenance and a sad shake of the head.

"By thunder!" exclaimed Kate, "that was hot work, and I am glad it is over."

"What! Is that proper language, Kate, for a young lady to use?"

"Of course it is, father; when I fight like a man, I have a right to talk like a man."

"You have been fighting, indeed. I told you to lie down, and keep out of the way."

"I did lie down, father; I fired every shot while I was lying down, except one that was sent after that fellow who was running down the hill."

"That man was Burt Adams, Miss Kate," said the half-breed. "I'm sorry he saw you."

"I don't know why; I think he will not be likely to come near my pistol again."

"You're too purty, Miss Kate, and Burt Adams is a—a—devil."

"Then he is a sneaking coward of a devil, and I am not afraid of him. What are they doing now, father? Do they mean to make another attack?"

"I can't say, Kate, but they are mounting, and seem to be riding away. Yes, there they go. I had supposed they would wait until night, and give us another trial. Do you suppose they mean to waylay us at some other place, Tête Bois?"

"Think they got enough. We get to the hills to-night, and then we not afraid of 'em."

As soon as it was dusk, the horses were hitched to the wagons, and the party continued their course up the stony bed of the stream, until they were able to go on the land again. Traveling all night, they reached the mountains, and found the pass of which Mr. Brainard and Tête Bois had spoken. They entered its rugged defiles, and commenced their journey upward toward the clouds, deeming themselves out of danger from enemies, as the Indians would not be likely to follow

them, and could easily be resisted if they should make the attempt.

The pass was not much of a pass, but the party struggled through and up it, slowly and toilsomely, animated by the hope of reaching what lay on the other side of that vast range of mountains. Several times they were obliged to take their wagons apart, and transport both them and their contents on the backs of their horses over difficult places, but the wagons had been built as light as possible, in anticipation of such a contingency, and they at last surmounted all obstacles, and stood on the crest that divides the Atlantic and Pacific slopes. The view that met their gaze almost repaid them for their labors and hardships. Below them lay the rugged, precipitous, cavernous side of the mountains ; to the north and south arose the snow-topped chains, seemingly endless and immeasurable ; at the right the Three Tetons towered up out of the plain, until their heads were lost in the clouds ; and before and beneath them stretched out a splendid landscape of hill and prairie, lakes, streams and rivers, dimly seen in the hazy distance, and at last melting away and mingling, apparently, with immensity.

They could not spend much time in admiring the glorious view, for the descent to the plain was before them, and they knew that it would be laborious and difficult as their upward journey had been. They set out again, with light hearts and great anticipations, and bravely worked their way down as they had worked up, until, their long weeks of toil, danger and hardship ended, they encamped near the foot of the great mountains, and enjoyed the rest that they so much needed.

CHAPTER VII.

BURT ADAMS' FORTUNES AND MISFORTUNES.

BURT ADAMS was not long in coming to the conclusion that the trust which had been confided to him by the dead chief was no sinecure. His subjects soon grew discontented, and they showed that they did not much relish the idea of

being governed by a white man—and a mean white man, at that—and that they had no intention of submitting to all his whims, humors and caprices. Adams was so annoyed by their conduct, that he cursed old Mus-to-qua for placing upon his head a “fruitless crown.”

The Indians were right, according to their customs and traditions, for the man who had been left to them as a leader by the will of their chief appeared to overlook their interests entirely, and to busy himself, in thought and action, about something with which they had nothing to do. He neither planned nor proposed any expeditions, he led out no war-parties, he neither hunted nor fished, no fresh scalps were drying in the lodges, and the arms and bows of his savage allies grew stiff from want of use.

The fact was, that Burt Adams was thinking more of the concealed treasure of which Mus-to-qua had told him, than of the charge that had been committed to him. Scalps were one of his failings, it is true, but money was another; and money, just at that time, was more in favor than scalps. He had become tired of his barbarous life, and longed for variety. He wanted to see the settlements again, to mingle in such semi-civilized society as he had been accustomed to, to dance the gay fandango in Mexico, to flourish among his wild associates in California, to exhibit himself and scatter his cash at the bar-rooms of St. Louis. Gold was the one thing needful to enable him to accomplish his objects; with his pockets full of gold he could laugh to scorn the men who endeavored to outlaw him, he could go where he was not known, he could pass himself off as a returned Californian of immense wealth, he could be received among the greatest and the best, and his ignorance, his coarseness, his brutality, would be regarded only as amusing eccentricities; with gold he could—oh, he could do every thing, thought Burt Adams, and perhaps he was not far wrong.

It was necessary to find the hidden treasure; he had made up his mind to that, and he was fully prepared, when he found it, to break his promise to Mus-to-qua, and leave his Indian allies in the lurch. He wanted to go and search for it immediately, but felt that he could not desert the tribe until he was certain of the gold. When he proposed to the Indians to

make a visit to their old camping-ground, they indignantly rejected the proposition. Had the Crows become old women, that they could do nothing but move from one camp to another? they asked. Was the Big Knife getting to be a coward, that he could lead them nowhere but into hiding-places, where they could see neither friend nor foe?

The Big Knife was no coward, and railed at them violently for their refusal to listen to his proposition. Being in a very bad humor, he troubled himself about them no more, but took unto himself a confidant, a scoundrelly cut-throat of a Crow, whose unmusical name signified No Smoke. To No Smoke he told as much as he chose about the hidden treasure, and so filled his imagination with accounts of what might be done with so much gold, that the Indian became as avaricious and enthusiastic as his preceptor, and agreed to aid him in any effort he might make to gain possession of the property, Adams agreeing to make an equitable division of it when they should get it.

Thus the season was wearing away in comparative idleness, until the Indians determined that they would not stand such nonsense any longer, and appointed a deputation of their oldest and stoutest warriors, to wait on the Big Knife and compel him to do something.

Adams received them under the shade of a spreading oak, and asked them what they wanted.

"We are poor," said the spokesman. "We have few horses, we have scarcely any blankets, we have little powder and lead, we have nothing but meat and roots to eat, neither have we cloth and ornaments for our women. While Mus-to-qua was sick we were idle for a long time, and when he went to the spirit-land, and left us in the care of the Big Knife, we promised to obey him, and believed that we should then do something that would repay us for our lost time. But the days pass by, and we are still idle, our limbs are growing old and stiff for want of exercise, and we are getting poorer than the little men of the mountains. We shall be compelled to confess that we are old women, and to catch fish and dry them at the rivers on the plains. But the Crows were not made for that; they are birds of prey; and we know that there are white men on the plains who have all those things

that we want. We want their horses, their blankets, their powder and lead, their guns, their cloth and ornaments, and their scalps, for our lodges are bare. Will the Big Knife lead us against them, or shall we die here and wither away?"

Adams agreed with them that something must be done, and promised them that their reasonable desires should be satisfied, proving his sincerity by painting his face, and ordering the immediate recruiting of a war-party.

"I will give them their fill of fighting," he thought, "and then, perhaps, they will leave me alone."

The day after the promise was made, he set out, at the head of about fifty men, all mounted, armed, plumed and painted for war. They went in a south-westerly direction, expecting to hover about the trains that were often crossing on the Oregon trail, until they should meet one that was small enough or careless enough to be snapped up by their greedy and murderous beaks. Before striking the great trail, they crossed the Lewis Fork, and were resting on its banks, when the scouts brought intelligence of Morris Brainard's party, that was approaching the head-waters of the river.

Having learned the course that they were taking, Adams stationed his Indians in a defile through which he supposed his victims would have to pass, and waited for them. As has been seen, they eluded him, by going up the river, past his hiding-place.

When he discovered, in the morning, the position in which they had fortified themselves, he endeavored, unsuccessfully, to dissuade his Indian allies from making a direct attack. The attack was made, and was bloodily repulsed. Another attack, which he planned and led in person, was also a failure, and he drew off the dispirited savages, comforting them with the assurance that he had "told them so."

The painted braves were so broken down by their defeat that he had no great difficulty in persuading them to abandon their enterprise for the present, and to be obedient to his wishes. He told them that the train was going into the mountains, where it would be useless to attempt to make an attack upon it, but that they might meet it on the other side, where they could obtain reënforcements, and might be able to capture the whites and all their property. They acquiesced.

as they could propose nothing better, and sadly bent their course toward the north again, leading the horses of their fallen braves.

Working their way through one of the Hellgate passes, and not being incumbered with wagons or any baggage, they reached the eastern slope before Morris Brainard and his party had fairly crossed the mountains, and again shaped their course for the south, without pausing to tell the tale of their disaster at the village where they had left their women and children.

Burt Adams had a twofold motive in leading his allies on this expedition. The concealed treasure was one motive, and it was a great one—he meant to lead them near the spot which the dead chief had described to him; but he had another motive. A new idea, desire, or passion had sprung up in his breast, or, perhaps, an old one, that had been dead or forgotten for years, had been suddenly and strongly awakened. When he made the last attack upon Brainard's camp on the bluff, and came so near succeeding, almost entering the fortress before his approach was perceived, he had seen one of his Indians shot down by a pistol in the hands of a young woman—a handsome young woman! The sight had almost, as he would have expressed it, “knocked him endwise”—she was so rarely and brilliantly handsome, as she rose up and flashed forth death and defiance at the same instant. He was so paralyzed, that he was unable to use his weapons, until the tremendous strength of Tête Bois had destroyed his aids, and then he could only fire one unavailing shot and take to his heels.

When he gathered his defeated savages together, and afterward, when he led them northward, and through the defiles of the Hellgate pass, that beautiful girl was in his memory and filled his mind's eye. When he thought of her, not only the dusky squaws of his Indian allies, but the dark-eyed Mexican damsels, and the other nameless beauties who had favored him with their smiles when his pockets were heavy with gold, passed away from him like a stupid dream, and he dwelt only on her fair face and splendid eyes. If he could only gain that prize, by fair means or foul—though it must be confessed that he knew little about fair means—what more

could he, Burt Adams, wish for in this world—supposing he could get the gold. The gold and the girl—the girl and the gold—he thought and muttered to himself, longing and wishing for both with such desire and passion as an ignorant and brutal man can feel. If he could only get them both—he cared not which came first—he would care nothing for the Crows, or No Smoke, or—well, he thought nothing of a God, or a Hereafter, or any thing of that kind. The gold and the girl—the girl and the gold—he fed on the thought, and gloated over it, as he led his dusky followers onward with such feverish haste that they could hardly keep up with him.

The other side of the mountains, thought Burt Adams, would decide the question of the girl and the gold—the gold and the girl. Either would be better than none, and both would be far better than one; consequently, he must have both.

When he reached the camping-ground of the last summer, of which Mus-to-qua had spoken to him, he made his allies halt there, and wait, while he sent out careful scouts to examine the country for "sign," especially of white men. When some of the scouts returned, and reported that they had not only seen "sign" of white men, but had found a camp of the pale-faced wretches, Burt Adams was so overjoyed that the Crows began to believe that the Big Knife had gone crazy.

"I told you so!" he shouted, as he uttered a barbaric whoop. "I told you so, and now we will git 'em all, and hev' thar' skelps, and thar' blankets, and thar' powder and lead, and thar' hosses, and—ef thar' should be a gal among 'em, she's fur me, and I won't allow no meddlin' nor skelpin'."

He was not so joyful and confident after he had made a personal examination of the camp of the white men, but returned and reported that it was situated on an eminence, and appeared to be fortified.

"Jest the way they treated us afore," said he, in the tone of an ill-used man. "They allers seem bound to hev' the advantage on thar' side, ef they ken git it out of hills and logs. Durned ef I think it's a fa'r show."

The Indians, as well as Adams, were too impatient, too hungry, and too anxious for revenge, to wait any longer, and they resolved to attack the camp that night, and did so.

The night was not favorable for such an enterprise, as it was clear, and the moon was shining; but the Indians declared that their hearts were hot, and Adams felt that his was blazing, and they could not afford to watch for a better opportunity.

There was something ominous in the fact that the camp showed no lights, and that all was still as death as they approached it. Had it been abandoned, or—what? The assailants did not know, but they pressed on stealthily and silently, hoping to surprise the occupants, until they were themselves surprised by a sheet of flame, accompanied by leaden missiles of death, that flashed and flew at them from the top of the knoll, and made them scamper—those who could—for their lives.

Adams, who was now fairly raging, vowed that he would not be whipped so easily as that, and arranged his Indians for a concentric assault from all sides, on the knoll. It was a grand assault that they made, when the signal was given, and the struggle was a close and fierce one, for the Indians were as savage as wolves, in their hunger for revenge and booty, and they fought like furies; but they were beaten back at last, and the whites were left in undisturbed possession of the knoll. Among the last to retreat was Adams, who had once got inside the breastwork, and who carried back with him a gash in the face that did not improve his looks in the least.

When he was safe in his own camp with his Indians, he seemed much depressed in spirits, and sat down, with his forehead in his hands, and an expression of the greatest bewilderment.

"We've been fooled," he said, wrathfully but sadly. "'Tain't the same ones as we attacked afore. Thar' was four men and a gal in that party—one big man—I know him—that infarnal half-breed, Tête Bois. In this party thar' was only four men, and nary gal, and nary big man. 'Tain't the same party as t'other party, but what in thunder are these uns doin' here?"

As no one seemed able to answer him, he fell to musing, inwardly resolving that he would not get into such a hornet's nest again, but would commence a careful search for the gold and the girl.

Just before he fell asleep, he muttered to himself: "'Tain't the same party. Are these uns waitin' fur the gal? Are they huntin' fur the gold? Hang 'em! I wish they'd got but one head, and I had the skelpin' of it!"

CHAPTER VIII.

STUBBORN FORT MYERS.

WHEN Harry Chenault, Myers and Farrar returned to their camp, after their successful search for the square buried stone, they were full of glee, and anxious to be full of supper, for their exaltation had increased their appetite. Supper was prepared accordingly, and the savory fragrance of boiling meat soon pleasantly saluted their nostrils, and then the sense of taste was added to that of smell, and all appeared to feel good.

When supper was finished, and pipes were lighted, Pete Green, usually silent and reserved, came out with an important communication, which he expressed in these sententious words:

"Thar's sign."

"What sign?"

"What do you mean, Pete Green?"

"Hello! what's up now?"

"I didn't say nothin' about it," answered Pete Green to all these queries, "'cause I saw ye was busy, and was afeard it mought hinder yer work. And then, I didn't want to spile yer supper. But thar's sign."

"Out with it, Pete," said Farrar, "and tell us what it is. Is it Injin sign? Any thin' awful skeary?"

"Injin sign," answered the sententious Pete. "I saw it this mornin'. I went out and shot a black-tail—"

"What is a black-tail?" asked Harry.

"A black-tail deer, and that's his meat what ye've been eatin' fur supper to prove it."

"Deuced good proof," said Myers, loosening his vest.

"I crawled up on that black-tail, across the wind, so's he shouldn't nose me, and I shot him. I cut the throat of that black-tail, and tied his legs, and was carryin' him to camp, across my shoulder, with my head down, when I come across a trail—Injin trail, two men's trail, made lately. I sot down that black-tail, and I looked around, of course, and what should I see but suthin' red stickin' up above a rise in the ground. Thinks I, is that a prairie-flower, or is it a feather? Thinks I ag'in, I'm a durned fool ef I don't find out mighty soon. So I sighted my rifle at the red thing, and it slid out of sight, and then I knew it was an Injin. I picked up that black-tail, and carried him to camp, keepin' one eye behind me, and then watched out fur the Injins, and I saw 'em sneakin' and spyin' about, but they didn't dar' to do nothin'. And while I was cuttin' up that black-tail, I saw another Injin sneakin' and spyin' around. And that thar' meat," continued Green, as if he meant to exhaust the whole subject and defy contradiction—"that thar' meat, what you ate fur your supper, is the meat of that thar' black-tail!"

"Well done, Pete Green," said Harry. "You have managed to make a long story out of a black-tail and two or three Indians, and have talked yourself dry, I think. Take a taste of brandy. I suppose it amounts to this, that there are Indians about, and we must keep our eyes open."

"That's jist what it is," answered Farrar. "Let's put our lights out, and look to our weapons, and keep a good watch. So long as thar's Injins about, and we don't know who or how many they are, we can't be too keerful."

"I reckon they was Crows, by thar' paint," suggested Green.

"Crows are bad, up this way, and none too good anywhar'. Git ready, boys, fur we can't be too keerful. We'll hev' a moon to-night, though, and p'r'aps they won't dar' to come nigh us, unless thar's a heap of 'em."

"I hope they will come," exclaimed Harry, "for I would wish no better fun than to have a brush with the red-skins. I think we ought to teach them a good lesson, so that they will leave us alone hereafter."

"I think so, too," said Myers, "if they are willing to be taught; but I understand that they are an obstinate and intractable race of scoundrels."

Although the young gentlemen treated the Indian subject rather lightly, they lost no time in aiding their companions to clear up the camp and prepare their little fort, which Myers declared to be quite a neat and scientific affair, although he had planned it himself. All lights were put out, the horses were brought in and well secured, arms were duly loaded and inspected, and the four men took their positions at the corners of the fortification, to watch for the enemy.

They did not wait long, for the night was not far spent when a number of dusky forms were perceived approaching on the north side, crawling over the ridges, concealing themselves in the gullies, and gradually, though irregularly, advancing toward the knoll.

"They're comin'," said Ben Farrar, from his corner. "Every man fur himself!"

"And God for us all!" concluded Myers, to whom the situation seemed really perilous.

On and up came the Indians, and two shots from each angle of the fort were not enough to defeat or discourage them. The question was then one of close quarters, with pistols and knives, and then the revolvers of the two young gentlemen played their parts beautifully and effectively. The Crows were not yet educated up to that point of civilization, and thought that the very Old Harry must be in a man who could shoot without stopping to load.

Myers soon found his angle clear, and turned around just in time to send a bullet through a savage who was about to "bury the hatchet" in his friend's brain, and send him to the place where his treasure ought to be laid up. As the surveyor had discharged all his loads, he then layed about him stoutly with a clubbed rifle, and Harry followed his valiant example.

As Pete Green, who had stooped to pick up his rifle, rose to use it, he found himself confronted by a stalwart individual, dark-skinned and fiercely painted, at the sight of whom he gave a screech of horror, and threw up his hands. As he did so, his antagonist struck him twice with a two-edged knife, and would have finished him, if Farrar had not opportunely launched a hatchet at the head of the stranger, which struck him on the cheek, and sent him whirling over the logs.

The Indians, terrified by Green's terrific screech, and by the

fall of their leader, rolled and tumbled down the slope, mingling themselves, as much as they could, with the herbage and the ground, until they got themselves and their wounded well away from that stubborn little fort.

"I believe the red rascals have given us up as a bad job, and are satisfied with their lesson," said Harry, as he watched their retreating forms, and then produced a flask from a wagon. "As I have no doubt that we are all terribly thirsty, I propose that we drink the health of the gallant defenders of Fort Myers."

"I second the toast," said Myers, "not so much out of respect to the gallant defenders, as out of consideration for the dryness of my throat."

"Wa-al, fightin' is thirsty work, and I don't keer ef I take a bite off the same beaver tail. What do you say, Pete Green?"

Thus propounded Ben Farrar, and Green, who had not yet made himself visible, answered with a groan, and a faint request that, if it was brandy, it might be handed to him.

"Hello, Pete, what's the matter with you? Hev' ye got an onlucky wipe in this yere skrimmage? Durned if ye hevn't. Taste of this, old boy, and we'll fix ye up."

"Tell ye what, Ben Farrar, did ye hear me screech?"

"I heerd suthin' awful. What was the matter?"

"I saw a ghost, Ben, or suthin' wuss."

"That black-tail must have been too strong for him," suggested Harry.

"'Twasn't no black-tail, sir. Ben, that chap who cut me—the chap you knocked over—who do ye s'pose he was?"

"S'posed he war' some durned red-skin."

"Ben Farrar, that chap was Burt Adams!"

"Thunder and snakes! Pete, are you sure 'twas him?"

"Sartin; that's what made me screech so."

"Boys, it's no use talkin'; we *will* hev' to look out sharp. Ef that villain is around, we'll hev' hot times yet."

The young gentlemen were anxious to know who Burt Adams was, and all about him, but the hunter was not in the humor for telling them.

"Not to-night, boys; not to-night. Let us make Pete Green as comfortable as we ken, and then let those who are able get some sleep, for thar'll be work to do to-morrer."

As the old man's word was law in the camp, the wounded hunter was attended to, and Harry and Myers lay down to sleep, Farrar saying that there was no sleep for him, and he must watch.

In the morning they found their breakfast ready when they woke, and Ben Farrar, with a very solemn face, gave them a brief account, while they were eating, of Burt Adams, the robber, murderer, and desperado in general. The young gentlemen did not appear to be specially terrified, although the old hunter was entirely in earnest, and seemed to stand in awe of the outlaw.

Over their pipes he told them that, if they expected to remain there any length of time, it would be proper to enlarge and strengthen their fortress, as there was no telling how soon they might be attacked or besieged by a stronger force.

They readily assented to this proposition, and spent the day in enlarging and remodeling the fort, Myers acting as engineer-in-chief and laborer. At last he vowed that the fort was strong enough to resist anything but heavy artillery, and Harry fairly swore that he would not work another stroke if the prairie was crowded with men a thousand times worse than Burt Adams. Night coming on, they had their supper and their pipes, and all lay down to sleep, except Myers, who was left on guard, with instructions to call Farrar at eleven o'clock.

CHAPTER IX.

SPIRITS OF HEALTH, OR ——?

THE defenders of Fort Myers would have done better to leave Harry Chenault on guard, for he seemed to be attacked by a fit of wakefulness, and did not manifest the slightest disposition to snore, or to avail himself of any of his privileges as a sleeper, although he had declared that he was nearly tired to death. The truth of the matter was, that the young gentleman was excited on the subject of the concealed treasure, more especially as he had been kept, during an entire day, from the search that

he so longed to prosecute. He was now certain that the treasure was there, and that it was to be found by whoever should be skillful or lucky enough to strike the right place. He was not avaricious, and was moved by the novelty, the strangeness of the adventure, more than by the thought of the gain that he would derive from the discovery of the gold. He looked upon it as a good thing for his friend Myers, whose affection for his sister Madeline he more than suspected, rather than as a source of profit to himself. He was fully convinced that the treasure was there, and fully resolved to find it, if it was to be found. They had discovered the right starting-point ; at the distance of forty miles in a westerly direction they had found the spring ; at the distance of a hundred and twenty-four paces in another course they had found the square buried stone ; and it only remained to strike the circle of XX, and to drop down the mysterious perpendicular—whatever that might be—and the wealth would be forthcoming.

Filled with these thoughts, he tossed and turned about until he was convinced that he could not possibly sleep. His wakefulness grew upon him ; he wondered whether it was not all a dream or a hallucination ; and he was irresistibly impelled to go and see whether the square stone with a cross upon it was really there, was there still, or whether he had dreamed about it, or it had been placed there by fairies, and had vanished as the sun rose the next morning.

He got up, shook off the night dews and his blanket together, and walked out under the trees. He met Myers, who was standing his watch rather sleepily, and who asked him what was the matter.

"Nothing, my dear fellow, only I can't sleep, and am going to take a little walk."

"If you are so wakeful, I will let you stand my watch, for I would not have the least objection to turning in."

"Thank you, but I wouldn't for the world deprive you of the pleasure of watching over this beautiful fort of yours. I am only going to take a little walk, for your good and mine, and will return soon. Don't shoot me for an Indian when you see me sneaking back."

"If you don't get shot by an Indian, I will think you in luck. Go along, though, and I will promise you as good a

funeral as we can get up. A man who can refuse such a friendly offer as I made deserves to be shot."

Harry gave no heed to these uncomplimentary remarks, and walked down the slope, passed the spring, and paced off the hundred and twenty-four paces to the square buried stone.

It was there; he could see it plainly in the moonlight; and he put his fingers in the mark of the cross, to apply the test of two senses. The stone was still there; it had been no dream, nor had the fairies spirited it away before sunrise. It was real, and it told him that the treasure was to be found, and that he need not seek much further to find it.

Led by the same irresistible impulse that had brought him thus far, Harry walked on, through the path that he had cut in the thicket, to the brink of the deep chasm. Sitting down by the edge, he looked over into the dark gulf, that was fantastically and capriciously lighted, here and there, in spots, by broken bits of the moon's rays, and wondered how deep it was, whether any one had ever been down in it, whether it contained any snakes, and whether the treasure might not be concealed in that abyss.

As he listened and wondered, he thought that he heard sounds, as of a soft voice singing, or humming to itself, some scraps of a melody that suited the moonlight, and seemed to be a part of it. He listened more attentively, and was sure that he was not mistaken; the voice, also, was real—as real as the buried stone, or all his senses were combined to deceive him that night.

As he strained his ears and waited, the voice broke into another—a higher and richer melody. It seemed to be a woman's voice, to be located across the chasm, and to be at no great distance. Harry rubbed his eyes, and felt his brain whirl so that he nearly fell over the brink of the chasm. When he drew away from it, he heard a light laugh, and distinguished these words, that were sung merrily and musically:

"When will he come to me,
Over the land or sea,
He that I love as I love my life?
How will he speak to me,
Asking that I will be
Ever and ever his own dear wife?"

Harry was sure that this was real, and the same irresistible impulse that he had previously felt moved him to improvise a reply, and he did so, singing in low, but clear and manly tones:

“Coming across the deep,
Whether you wake or sleep,
Soon he will fly to his love and his life;
Soon he will ask it of you,
He, the brave and the true,
Ask you to be his own dear wife.”

Considered as a literary composition, Harry was not satisfied with this effort, and he was still less satisfied when he perceived that he had made an end of the music on the other side. He listened, but no more sweet sounds rippled to him through the night air. If he had been able to cross the chasm, and explore the mystery, he would not have hesitated to do so; but it was impossible, and he walked slowly back to the camp, hardly certain whether he was awake and in his right mind.

He found Myers nodding over his rifle, and accosted him in a hurried, excited manner, that woke him up.

“What is the matter, Harry?” asked the faithful sentry, noticing the peculiar appearance of his friend. “Have you seen a ghost?”

“I haven’t seen one, my boy, but I have heard one.”

“Here is more trouble. Don’t tell Farrar, or he will make us build another fort. Was it a spirit of health, or—the other thing?”

“I considered it a healthy spirit, for it had good lungs.”

“What did it do or say? Tell me all about it, Harry, for I am getting drowsy, and want something to rouse me up.”

Harry related his adventure, and his friend listened with a smile and a whistle, both expressive of incredulity.

“That is such stuff as dreams are made of, Harry. The moonlight has got into your head, and has set your wits to wandering. If it will spoil meat and fish, it is no wonder that it has a softening effect on your brains.”

“There is nothing the matter with my brains, and I heard that singing, as sure as I live.”

“You had better go to rest, my boy, and sleep off this fit. By the way, it is time to call Farrar. Don’t tell him any

thing about this fancy of yours, or he will set us at work on the fortifications again."

Harry concluded that his friend's advice was good, so he rolled himself up in his blanket, and was soon asleep, and dreaming about buried stones, and chasms, and musical voices, that were strangely mixed up with savage fights, and desperadoes with painted faces. In all his dreams, he was still haunted by the words of the song:

"When will he come to me,

Over the land or sea,

He that I love as I love my life?"

When he awoke in the morning, he found that he had not forgotten the adventure of the night, and that it was still a reality to him. He resolved to explore the other side of the ravine, and requested Myers to accompany him. The surveyor deliberately smoked over the proposition, and consented to humor the whim. Accordingly, not having the fear of Ben Farrar before their eyes, they sallied out, armed and equipped with rifles, pistols, and axes. As they passed the square stone, Myers noticed it, and said that it would be much more sensible to search for the gold, than to hunt apparitions in the daytime.

"Time enough for that," answered Harry. "There is no danger that the treasure will run away. We will attend to it as soon as we have investigated this mystery."

"I hope the gold may be more substantial than the phantom we are now in pursuit of. The ghost of a voice appears to me to be about the most airy and unimaginable thing I ever heard of."

"But there was a voice, and what if it should prove to be a human voice? Is not this yawning chasm a capital place for ghosts to congregate?"

"Yes, if they are fond of disagreeable holes. How do you propose to cross it?"

"We must make a bridge. There is a tall and stout tree that will serve the purpose."

The young men took off their coats, and plied their axes vigorously, until the tough oak cracked, swayed, bent its proud head over the gulf, and fell with a crash on the other side. The bridge-makers saw that it was strong and firm, and then

went on it, clearing away the branches with their axes, and leaving a few at the sides to hold on by. They complacently surveyed their work, left their axes among the bushes, and crossed the dreaded chasm.

As Harry thought that the voice had come from a point at a short distance beyond their crossing-place, they walked in that direction, carefully examining the ground as they went. Suddenly, Harry darted forward, picked up a bit of dark muslin that was hanging on a bush, and held it out triumphantly.

"I told you so!" he exclaimed. "I knew something would come of it! Now tell me again, Sam Myers, that I was dreaming, or my wits had gone wool-gathering. Here is the proof to confound you."

"I don't choose to be confounded," answered Myers, as he took the shred of muslin and examined it. "Your proof is a good one, Harry—a proof that some one has been here. This little scrap of civilization has not hung on that bush a great while, or it would have been frayed and faded. And see here, Harry, there are marks of feet on the ground."

"Yes, indeed; we are not the only sojourners in this wilderness. The voice was a human voice, and I really heard it."

"The next question is, whether it was the voice of an Indian or a white woman. Are you sure that it uttered the words that you mentioned?"

"As sure as I am that I am speaking to you. I could not forget them."

"We have had a pretty powerful demonstration of the fact that there are Indians in this vicinity, and I suppose they must have a white woman as a captive among them, for no Indian woman would be likely to sing such a song. I can account for it in no other way."

"It will be glorious if that turns out to be true. What a romantic affair it will be to rescue her!"

"All the more romantic, I suppose, because it will probably be a perilous attempt. We will take a smoke over that, my boy. I'm blessed, if here isn't a way down into the gully! Suppose we look in there, and see what the hole is made of."

"Agreed."

Myers leading the way, they descended a small ravine that

led into the main cañon, and found the declivity not a very difficult one, as it had been fashioned by nature in rude imitation of a flight of steps. When they reached the bottom, they saw that the chasm was not as deep as they had supposed it to be, though fully as precipitous, and that a clear and cool little stream flowed through a bed of sand and rocks.

"It must be into this place that our spring empties," suggested the surveyor.

"Yes; I knew it had a sink somewhere. Sam Myers—look!—what's that?"

Harry grasped his companion's arm, and stared wildly, as he pointed to an object that lay on the sand near the water.

The two friends stepped forward, and examined the object. It proved to be the body of a young man, dressed in corduroy coat and pants, and hickory shirt. Lying by his side, with his right hand clenched on the handle, was a wooden pail. He had been dead for some time, as the body was quite cold and stiff. There was a stab in the back, the throat was cut, the scalp had been torn from the head, and there was a small cross, cut with a sharp instrument, on the forehead.

"This is something beyond my comprehension," said Myers, "and we must fall back on Ben Farrar. We must tell him of this, if he keeps us at work on the fortifications for a week. Come, Harry."

The young gentlemen hastened back to the camp, and told the old hunter of all they had heard, done and seen. He listened attentively, shook his head dubiously, and silently and solemnly accompanied Harry to the cañon, leaving Myers in charge of the camp and Pete Green. When he examined the body, and saw the cross that had been scored on the forehead, he shook his head more profoundly than ever.

"I don't want to know nothin' more," said he. "The feller's ha'r has been raised, and thar' is Burt Adams' mark. We will bury him here, and git back to camp."

A shallow grave was dug, and the sand was heaped over the body, and Farrar silently led the way to the camp, where Myers asked him what he thought of the matter.

"Thar's no tellin'," he answered, "'ceptin' that Burt Adams has been around and left his mark. It puzzles me to guess who the dead feller was. From his looks and his clothes I

should take him to be a Kanuck or an Englisher. Thar's one thing sartin: we must go to work and make this place stronger, and must keep closer in camp, fur Burt Adams is about, and we can't be too keerful."

Harry Chenault and Myers cast at each other glances of dismay, and winked very solemnly.

CHAPTER X.

DOWNS AND UPS.

BURT ADAMS, who had been the cause of so much mental anxiety to Green and Farrar, and of so much bodily labor on the part of Chenault and Myers, was not idle, but was at work with brain and hand. He was determined to prosecute his search for the gold and the girl—the girl and the gold—and felt confident of finding both in that vicinity.

After his unsuccessful assault upon Fort Myers, he told his followers that they had made a slight mistake, and had attacked the wrong party. He assured them that the train which they had expected to find was somewhere in the neighborhood, or might soon be expected, and that they would have no difficulty in capturing it, if they would follow his directions, and not rush on blindly, of their own accord, as they had lately done. As they were intensely indignant because of their costly failures, anxious to retrieve their losses, and eager for revenge, he easily persuaded them to remain quiet, until he should reconnoiter the country and gain some intelligence that would benefit them. In reconnoitering for their benefit, he intended, like a sensible scoundrel, to consider his own interest in the first place, and to seek the gold and the girl—the girl and the gold.

Alone, and armed with his rifle, his long double-edged knife and his hunting-knife, he went to the deep hole, into which one of Mus-to-qua's young men had fallen. He shuddered, as he looked down in the yawning cavity, and thought how near an escape he had from being swallowed up in its unknown

depths. He saw the shattered pine, all bare and white, as the old chief had described it, standing near the hole. He next looked for the tall sharp stone, and saw it, about half an arrow's flight from the tree. Taking his stand behind the tree, he took the line of the tree and the stone, and saw where it crossed a chasm or cañon, for such he knew it to be, although it was distant about two hundred yards, and was concealed by a heavy growth of trees, vines and bushes.

Going forward to the cañon, in the line that he had marked out with his eye, he found a ravine, something like a rough natural staircase, that led down to it, and he followed this, until he reached the bottom of the dark chasm, where he saw a small stream of water.

"I remember this place," he muttered, "fur I've been in it afore. Ef I had knowed thar' was gold here, I wouldn't be in it now. The next thing is—whar' is the gold?"

As the way by which he had come was rather crooked, he had lost sight of the point at which the imaginary line crossed the chasm, and it was necessary to find it. Availing himself of slight projections in the cliff, and clinging to the side of it with his fingers and toes, he contrived to climb up, until he could again see the sharp stone and the shattered tree, and get them in a line with his eye. Having done so, and having firmly fixed in his mind the point at which the line met the rocky wall, he dropped down on the sand, and stood below that point.

"This yere's the place that Mus-to-qua spoke of, fur sartin," said he. "Thar's the stream, and thar's the bank, though it's a mighty queer thing to call a bank—it looks to me like a rock, and a darned steep and high one, too. Under that bank, as he called it, must be the smooth round stun' that he told me about, the stun' that kivers the gold—and thar' it is, by gracious! It's a small stun', and 'tain't like the t'other stun's. I've got it now, by thunder! and the Crows may go to grass, and No Smoke may gnaw his finger-nails. Now fur it!"

The desperado knelt by the stone, removed it from its place, and eagerly gazed down into the hole before him.

It was empty!

It was plain that the hole had been dug for a cache, because it was two feet deep, it was dug through the sand into

the blue clay, the sides had been plastered with mud, which still adhered to them, and it had been carefully fashioned and protected, as if for the reception of something valuable. Adams thought, as he examined it more closely, that he could perceive small, shining particles on the bottom and at the sides of the hole.

"Thar's somebody been here afore me," was his muttered conclusion. "P'raps it was old Mus-to-qua himself. No, that ain't likely, fur what would he hev' done with the gold? It's been here, that's sartin, and it's gone, that's sartin, too. Jest like my infarnal luck! Curse it! I feel as ef I could kill somebody right now."

As he spoke, he looked around, and saw, as if a lamb had appeared for the sacrifice, a white man descending the declivity by which he had entered the cañon where the treasure was not. It was a young man, innocent in appearance, with a pail in his hand, and Burt Adams marked him as an easy victim.

The outlaw crouched in the cover of a projecting point of rock, and watched the young man bend down by the side of the stream, and fill his pail with the clear water. As he rose to leave, with the pail in his hand, there was a stealthy step behind him, a sudden spring, a heavy blow, and a long two-edged knife went through him, cutting his heart in twain. The step, the blow and the knife were Burt Adams', who chuckled triumphantly as he stood over his fallen victim.

"Who is this feller?" he muttered, as he gazed at his work. "I don't believe it's one of those up thar'," (pointing in the direction of Fort Myers), "'cause sech fighters as they are couldn't hev' been so green. Shouldn't wonder a bit ef he b'longed to t'other party, though they can't be sot down as fools, nuther. Reckon I'll take the back track on his trail, and see whar' he come from."

The outlaw wiped his long knife, picked up his rifle, and went up out of the cañon as he had come. The water of the little stream was reddened, for a while, with the blood of the murdered man—but it was only for a little while.

Burt Adams had been terribly disappointed, for he had felt as sure of the possession of that gold, as if he had had it in his hands. There could be no doubt that he had gone to the right place, for the directions were plain; he had followed

them exactly ; they had led him to a smooth round stone, under which he had found a hole that had been intended, beyond question, for a place of concealment. But it was empty ; some lucky individual had been before him, and had carried off the prize.

It was by no means difficult to track the course of his victim, for it was evident that he had been to the brook to get water more than once. Adams traced back the trail a distance of about half a mile from the cañon, until he saw a thin wreath of blue smoke rising up among the trees beyond him.

Creeping stealthily up on the trail, he reached the summit of a ridge, from which he could look down into a deep and secluded glen. Still, he could see nothing but the smoke, and it was not until he had descended the hill, and had crawled among the bushes nearly to the smoke itself, that he could obtain a view of the occupants of the glen.

He could see two wagons, some horses grazing at a little distance, a small fire, over which a pot was boiling, and four persons seated near the fire. One was a fine-looking gentleman, rather past the middle age ; another was a tall, stout, dark-featured hunter, whom the outlaw recognized as the *voyageur*, Tête Bois ; a third was an athletic young man ; and the fourth was the handsome girl he had seen once before. His eyes were lit up with a baleful fire as he gazed upon her, and he forgot, for the moment, the lost gold.

“ This is t’other party, fur sartin,” he thought. “ Thar’ was four men in it, includin’ that big Kanuck, and the gal ; here is the gal and three men, includin’ the Kanuck—t’other chap I killed, and got his skelp. Lucky I found him, ’cause I should never hev’ hit on this yere hole ef it hedn’t been fur his trail and the smoke.”

Those who sat around the fire were talking, and Adams crept toward them, under the bushes, until he was near enough to hear what they said. The slight rustling that he made attracted their attention, and they ceased speaking, and listened.

“ Some animal, perhaps,” said the girl, as she raised a pistol and fired into the bushes.

“ She’s mighty quick with her shootin’-iron,” thought Adams, as he heard the bullet whistle near his head. “ Jest wait till I git holt of her !”

He lay quiet, and the conversation was resumed.

"If you think we are near the place, father," said the young man, "I see no reason why we should not go and hunt for the treasure. We ought not to stop in this neighborhood longer than we can help."

"That is true; but I am not sure that we are in the right place. As the search may occupy several days, or a week, we ought to make ourselves as secure as possible, for we can not be too careful in this country, where Indians may be continually prowling about. We must contrive a cache, in which we can conceal some of our provisions, and such other articles as we do not require at present, so that they may not be lost, in case we should be stampeded. Then I will go with Tête Bois, and make an examination of the locality. It is very likely that there are Indians in the neighborhood, for we were almost certain that we heard firing the night before last."

"How do you expect to find the gold, sir, without the map?"

"There's a deep and narrow cañon not far from here, at the bottom of which there is a small stream—"

"I know that place," interrupted Tête Bois; "where Thomas went for water."

"If that is the place I mean, I must find a blasted pine tree and a pointed rock near it. The line from one to the other crosses the ravine, and beneath the point of crossing is a smooth round stone, partly imbedded in the sand. Under that stone is the hole from which I took the gold that I found, and concealed it in my own cache, and my cache is located in the rock, near that place."

"This is the chap, then," thought Adams, "who stole my gold! And he's arter the gold, too. Wonder ef those t'other fellers, across the cañon, are arter it, too. Jest as like as not; what else would they be here fur? Anyhow, it is sartin that the gold is thar' yet, and this hoss thinks he stands as good a chance as any of 'em, and p'r'aps a durned sight better."

"That all seems to be clear enough, father," said the young man, "and the sooner we commence the search the better, as I think. If we must make a cache for our plunder, we ought to go to work without loss of time."

"Come on, then. I have chosen a place for the cache, and will show it to you."

Two of the men arose, leaving the half-breed and the girl, and Burt Adams thought that he had better slip away during the slight bustle that ensued. He did so, and noiselessly crawled back up the hill.

"Durned ef I don't feel better," he thought, as he walked toward the Indian encampment. "I would hev' liked to see whar' they make the cache, but mought hev' been found out, and the plunder don't matter much to me. I jest believe that I've got a tol'abul sure thing on both the gold and the gal now. I was mighty riled when I turned up that stun', and saw that the shiners had been slipped out; but things look brighter now. The fust thing to do is to sneak up on that party, and git the gal and the old man. The rest will do fur skelpin', and that business and the plunder will suit the Injins. I want the gal, though, and the old man must show me whar' the gold is, afore he gits rubbed out. They thought they had a mighty nice hidin'-place down thar', but they hev' only got into a hole whar' it will be easy to pen 'em up and make an end of 'em."

Thus soliliquizing, the outlaw returned to his Indian allies in a very good humor.

CHAPTER XI.

KATE HAS A SENSATION.

"I MUST admit, father, that I am pretty badly tired out," said Kate Brainard, as the train halted on a shady and grassy plateau, near the base of the mountains. "We ought to be very thankful that we are here at last, and, for my part, I can hardly believe it yet. Our crossing the mountain seems to me nothing less than a miracle, but I am still more surprised that you have brought the wagons through in any sort of condition."

"The wagons are nearly used up, my dear, and you do not appear to be much better off. I will spread you a blanket under this oak, and you must lie down and rest."

Kate was glad of the opportunity, and soon forgot her toil and fatigue in a sweet and refreshing sleep.

After the horses were turned out to graze, a conversation ensued between the men, with regard to what should be done next. Mr. Brainard thought it would be best to find some secluded spot that would be difficult of access, where they might fix their camp without fear of being molested by prowling bands of savages.

The half-breed was of the same opinion, and sallied out, rifle in hand, for the purpose of finding a suitable place. He returned in the course of an hour, and announced that he had selected an excellent location in a glen, where it was not possible that they would be discovered, if they used ordinary caution. The glen contained grass and pools of rain-water for the animals, and there was a fine stream in a ravine at no great distance, that would supply them with water for drinking purposes.

As this appeared to be just what was wanted, the horses were brought in, Kate was awakened, and Tête Bois led the party to the glen. It was with considerable difficulty that the horses and wagons were taken down over the rugged ground, and it was not until nightfall that all were safely ensconced in the deep valley, as "snug as a bug in a rug," as Kate said. Mr. Brainard appeared to be not altogether pleased with the location, as there seemed to be no good avenue of escape in case they should be attacked; but Tête Bois assured him that there was not the remotest danger of discovery, and that they would be safe if the whole mountain swarmed with Indians, as they were well hid, and their trail had been carefully covered.

As it was too late for further investigations, nothing remained but to get supper and go to sleep, which all were glad to do.

During the night Mr. Brainard, who was watching the camp, awoke the half-breed.

"Be quiet," said he, "and listen. Do you hear any thing?"

"Think I do," answered Tête Bois, as he sat up and listened.

"What do you think it is?"

"Sounds like shootin'."

"Just what I thought; but it must be at a great distance. Who can it be?"

"Injins, I reckon. Shouldn't wonder if fight goin' on somewhar'."

In the course of half an hour the sounds, which had been so faint as to be hardly distinguishable, ceased, and Tête Bois told Mr. Brainard that he would watch during the rest of the night. He did not apprehend any danger to themselves, he said, but wished to satisfy himself in regard to the nature of the noises, if they should be heard again.

The night passed without any further disturbance or excitement, and all awoke in the morning feeling much refreshed. In the first place, they cleared up and arranged their camp, with an eye to comfort as well as security, and provided proper pasture for the horses. Then John Brainard took his rifle and went in search of game, and Tête Bois showed Thomas the way to the ravine that he had spoken of, leaving Mr. Brainard in charge of the camp. When the two expeditions returned, the one with a deer and the other with water, it was dinner-time, and, after that meal had been duly discussed, Mr. Brainard and the half-breed went to reconnoiter, and to determine whether they really were at or near the spot where the treasure was supposed to be concealed.

They returned with good and bad tidings. Mr. Brainard had found the tree and the stone, by means of which he was to strike a line that would lead him near the cache, but had not been able to push his investigations further that evening; and Tête Bois had observed what he declared to be unmistakable signs of Indians, but had also been prevented, by the lateness of the hour, from making further inquiries. Mr. Brainard felt sure that he recognized the cañon as that in which he had found and concealed the gold, and the half-breed was confident that Indians were in the vicinity. There was something to be sought, therefore, and something to be avoided.

John Brainard and his sister were greatly excited over the news about the gold, and gave little heed to that which related to the Indians. Money is power, as well as knowledge, and John felt a natural desire that his father should become the possessor of the gold, while Kate was not insensible to the

truth that beauty itself passes current more readily, and is in greater demand, when it is accompanied by a goodly portion of this world's goods.

After dusk they left the camp together, John armed with his rifle, and Kate with her faithful revolver, saying that they intended to take a short stroll under the moonlight. This was contrary to Mr. Brainard's wish, but, as he was not accustomed to oppose himself to the will of his daughter, she carried her point, as usual. The young folks were cautioned against going far, and against coming into collision with Indians, which cautions they promised to remember, and forgot them as soon as they set out.

They went directly to the ravine in or near which the treasure was reported to be concealed; they parted the undergrowth, and looked down at its depths, into which the rays of the moon hardly penetrated; and they walked along near its edge, seeking a place for descent.

They reached a small gully, which appeared to lead down to the ravine, and John Brainard concluded to make an exploration. He laid his rifle on the ground, told Kate to remain where she was for a few moments, and disappeared down the declivity.

If Kate Brainard had not been accustomed to the wilderness, and familiarized with some of its dangers, she would naturally have been troubled with timidity, on being thus left alone; but she knew that her brother would soon return, the moon was shining brightly, and she had a rifle and a pistol, her skill with which weapons had lately been proved upon human foes. Consequently, the thoughts that filled her mind were not thoughts of fear. She looked up at the starry sky, of which she caught pleasant glimpses through the leafy tops of the tall trees; she imagined herself the possessor of or sharer in that wonderful hoard of gold that had lain concealed during so many years; she wondered about the gay and brilliant life in the settlements, of which she had heard so much, and which she had so often longed to experience; and she dreamed, as maidens will, of an ideal lover, handsome, brave and accomplished, who was to step down from the clouds and lay his heart and his hand at her feet.

The few minutes that her brother had mentioned passed by,

and more minutes followed them, but he did not return. She became lonesome and began to feel uneasy. She thought that she would enliven the solitude and drive away unpleasant fancies, by a little music, and she sung, with a clear and rich voice, a stanza which spoke inquiringly concerning that ideal lover :

"When will he come to me,
Over the land or sea,
He that I love as I love my life?
How will he speak to me,
Asking that I will be
Ever and ever his own dear wife?"

As the sound of her voice died away on the night air, she was startled at hearing another voice, low but manly, singing what seemed to be a reply. She did not understand the first part of the melody, but the last words, she was certain, were such as these :

"Soon he will ask it of you,
He, the brave and the true,
Ask you to be his own dear wife."

What could it mean? Was it a fancy, bred of the moon-beams? Was it the spirit of prophecy speaking to her, or were there other spirits abroad, there in the vast wilderness? Or was it really the voice of a man that she had heard, seeming to come from across the chasm? Could there be such a thing as a "sly flirtation" in that solitary place?

Whatever it might be, she was obliged to confess that she was frightened, and her heart beat so fast that she could not have sung another note if she had been so inclined. She arose silently, and stepped to the edge of the gully to call her brother, but she met him coming up, and noticed that he, also, seemed surprised and startled.

"What is the matter, Kate?" he asked. "Have you heard any thing?"

"Yes; have you?"

"I heard you singing, and thought I heard another voice. What did you hear?"

"You heard it, John? Then it was real. I feared that it might be a spirit. I felt lonesome, John, and sung a little, to keep my spirits up while you were gone, and I had hardly

finished singing a few words, when I thought I was answered by a man's voice, that came from the other side of the ravine."

"So it seemed to me. Do you know what he said?"

"Nothing of any consequence, I suppose. I was so frightened that I couldn't listen. I am glad to know that you heard it, for I am now convinced that it was not a spirit."

"Spirits be—durned! I wish I could get across that gap, and I would soon see what sort of a spirit it was."

"Don't think of such a thing, John. Let us go back to the camp. I don't feel like staying here any longer. We have been away a great while, I am afraid, and father will be uneasy."

"Come along, then. I don't like to leave this mystery unsolved, but I suppose there is no help for it now."

As the brother and sister walked back to the camp, they concluded that they would say nothing about their adventure at present, and that John would investigate the matter at his leisure. They were duly chided by Mr. Brainard for their long stay, and went to sleep and forgot the scolding; but Kate did not forget her moonlight experience, for she heard a manly voice in her dreams, repeating those words that had floated to her across the abyss:

"Soon will he ask it of you,
He, the brave and the true,
Ask you to be his own dear wife."

She was very well pleased with her dreams, and arose in the morning with a fresh and bright experience of life.

Her sentimental mood did not prevent her from attending to her duties about the camp, and she prepared breakfast, and sent Thomas to the ravine for water. While the meal was being consumed, she felt that she could not keep such a secret any longer, and related her adventure of the previous night. Her father and the half-breed were inclined to disbelieve her, and to credit the occurrence to her imagination; but she was indorsed by her brother, and the combined statements of the two could not be doubted. *Tête Bois*, who, as an old *voyageur*, was a strong believer in ghosts, was inclined to refer the matter to some supernatural agency; but Mr. Brainard, who was a practical and scientific man, scouted such an idea.

and thought it probable that there might be some white men in the neighborhood.

"If that supposition should turn out to be true," said he, "I really hope we may not meet them, for I am afraid that I would not be able to prosecute my search without their knowledge, and I do not wish to have any more partners in my secret than I have already. We should probably find them a rough band of trappers or hunters, among whom my gold, if I should recover it, would be no safer than among the Indians. It may be, however, that the Indians who are in the vicinity, as Tête Bois tells us, have a white captive, who took that method of making known his presence."

"If that should be so, father," exclaimed Kate, "what a splendid thing it would be to rescue him from their hands!"

"Very splendid, especially if we should lose our scalps for our pains."

The discussion of the adventure did not prevent the men from stowing away a reasonable quantity of provisions, and it was kept up, over their pipes, as they sat around the remains of the fire, until the attention of Kate was attracted by a rustling of leaves and a slight crackling of twigs.

"Hush! What's that?" she said in a whisper.

"Thought I heard suthin' in the bushes," said Tête Bois.

"Some animal, perhaps," replied Kate, as she turned quickly, and fired her pistol in the direction from which the sound seemed to come.

No more rustling was heard, nor any other noise, and the young lady regained her equanimity.

"It was nothing, Kate," said Mr. Brainard, "and you have thrown away a load."

"That is all the thanks I get for saving your lives and quieting your apprehensions! Go on with your stupid talk."

The conversation ended with a grand acquiescence in Mr. Brainard's opinion, that the next thing in order was to arrange a cache in which they might conceal a portion of their portable property, in case they should be suddenly compelled to change their quarters, as was at least possible when the neighborhood was known to be dangerous. The men rose to perform this duty, and Kate, in the absence of Thomas, attended to the light drudgery of the camp.

CHAPTER XII.

TROUBLE OUT OF THE CAMP.

THE place selected for the cache was a piece of greensward in the glen, from a portion of which the sod was carefully removed, and an egg-shaped hole was excavated. The sides of the hole were lined with grass, and the articles to be concealed were placed within it, after which they were covered with sods and earth, and the grass was replaced. The dirt that had been taken out of the excavation was carried away, and a fire of brush was built over the spot, to obliterate the traces of the cache.

When this task was finished the men returned to the camp, where they found Kate much troubled at the non-appearance of Thomas, who had been sent to the ravine for water, early in the morning, and who had not yet returned. This was another mysterious occurrence, and naturally connected itself with Kate's adventure of the night before. It was not possible that the young man had lost his way, and it was feared, as Indians, and perhaps white men, were known to be in the neighborhood, that he had been waylaid and murdered.

Tête Bois proposed to go and seek for him, but was overruled by Mr. Brainard, who said that all was in readiness to commence the search for the treasure, and that they would go together, and look for Thomas at the same time.

They concealed their horses at a distance from the camp, provided themselves with eatables, and went to the ravine. When they reached it, Mr. Brainard and the half-breed went down the declivity that led into the chasm, leaving John and his sister above, instructing them to keep watch, and to give the alarm if any one should approach.

They had hardly reached the bottom, when they were convinced that a murder had been committed, for the ground was trampled, and there were stains of blood on the sand and on the stones.

"Young feller been rubbed out," said Tête Bois; "but whar' he gone?"

"Perhaps he was only wounded, and has been able to crawl away."

"He come to camp, then."

"Perhaps he was not able to get so far."

"No blood up the way we came. Reckon he been buried here," concluded the half-breed, pointing to a spot where the sand appeared to have been turned up.

As they had brought a spade, together with an ax and a hammer, for the purposes of their exploration, Tête Bois soon removed the light sand, and disclosed the body of the young Englishman lying in its shallow grave. A glance at the mangled throat, the bleeding head, and the cross cut in the forehead, were sufficient to satisfy him how and by whose hand he had met his death.

"Burt Adams' mark," said Tête Bois, as he looked at the scarred cross.

"Can it be possible that that scoundrel has followed us? We saw no sign of him or his Indians in the mountains."

"Reckon they went some other way."

"We must be very careful of ourselves and of Kate, or we may be the victims, as Thomas is, of that murderous wretch. But this is a matter that puzzles me at present—who has buried the boy? It is evident that he has been killed by Burt Adams, for we know his mark well enough; but that scoundrel would not have taken the trouble to bury his victim."

"White men about," answered Tête Bois—"we know that 'cause we heard the firin', and Miss Kate heard the singin'. They had a fight, and they didn't git rubbed out by the Injins, 'cause they've been here, hev' found the boy, and hev' buried him. Thar's white men's sign 'bout here, Mr. Brainard, and I reckon we'd better hunt 'em up, 'cause Burt Adams and his Injins mought be too much for us alone."

"I believe you are right, Tête Bois, though I greatly dislike to meet them, for I am afraid that they may be no better or more friendly than the Indians. It will be best, in the first place, while we are here, to look for my treasure. If it is still here, we need not molest it, until we learn what sort of characters those white men are."

"All right, sir. I'll cover up the boy ag'in, and you go on with your s'archin'."

While the half-breed was replacing the sand over the body of the unfortunate Thomas, Mr. Brainard commenced his search for the lost cache. Carefully noting the line, as Burt Adams had done, it was not long before he discovered a round stone, which he quickly and eagerly raised.

"We are in the right place!" he exclaimed. "I have found the old cache, and mine is near it."

"All right, Mr. Brainard. You find the gold, and I reckon we can tote it to the camp."

"It must be in the side of the rock, just below here. Bring me the hammer, Tête Bois, for there must be a hollow place in the stone, which I can easily detect."

As the half-breed picked up the hammer from the ground, and stuck his spade into the yielding sand, he was startled by a shriek from above, followed by savage yells and the discharge of several rifles.

"Burt Adams and his Injins!"

"The red imps are upon us!"

With these exclamations, the two men dropped their implements, seized their weapons, and hastened up the declivity that led out of the cañon.

The cause and nature of this alarm need some explanation.

It will be remembered that when Mr. Brainard and the half-breed went down into the chasm, John Brainard and his sister were left above, to keep watch, and to give the alarm if any one should approach.

John Brainard, feeling sure that Kate would be safe, when she was so near to her father and his friend, went further into the forest, and established himself as a sort of picket-guard, for the general protection of the party, telling Kate to remain where she was, and not go too close to the edge of the ravine.

Kate heard this good advice, but did not follow it. Her mysterious moonlight serenade was still fresh in her remembrance, and she desired to place herself directly on the spot where she had heard it.

Accordingly, she walked to the edge of the ravine, and looked across the chasm. As she did so, she perceived that a large tree had fallen over it, a short distance below where she stood, and that its branches had been trimmed so as to form a bridge.

As soon as she saw the bridge, she knew that it had been made by human hands, and she also felt sure that the hands were those of white men, for it did not look like the work of Indians.

"There are white men near us," she thought. "I was sure of it. At least one white man has been here, for the voice that sung to me lately could be no other than that of a white man. He was a young man, too. He must have been a young man, for his voice was so sweet, and so—so—young! I wonder if he is handsome! I am sure I would like to see him, and judge for myself."

Her wish seemed to be near to accomplishment, for a clear and manly voice saluted her ears, singing, in low and plaintive tones, the same melody that she had once breathed forth, at the place where she then was :

"When will he come to me,
Over the land or sea,
He that I love as I love my life?
When will he speak to me,
Asking that I shall be
Ever and ever his own dear wife?"

It was plain that the voice came from across the chasm, and Kate Brainard involuntarily turned her eyes in that direction. As she did so, she hastily started back, for a young man, tall and handsome, with a rifle in his hand, stepped out from the shade of a tree and stood on the edge of the ravine.

Kate at first tried to hide her head, like an ostrich, and then she thought that it would be best to give the alarm to her father and Tête Bois, or to call her brother, who was in the woods beyond. Both ideas failed, for her confusion would not allow her to make up her mind, before the stranger spoke to her.

"Don't be afraid," said he. "I am one of the most harmless individuals you ever saw, and, if I should ever happen to be turned into a wild beast, I am sure that I could not injure a being so beautiful."

Compliments are pleasant to the young and fair, and Kate Brainard had heard few, except the rough but honest expressions of backwoodsmen; therefore it was not wonderful that she remained where she was, and even turned her blushing

face toward the good-looking and smooth-spoken young man.

"I was afraid, sir—that is, I thought," she stammered, "that there were strangers near us. My father and my brother are close by, and I suppose I ought to call them, as I was left here to give the alarm if I should see any one."

"There is no occasion for giving any alarm," answered Harry Chenault, for the young gentleman on the other side of the chasm was, of course, that enthusiastic seeker for hid treasure. "Certainly, you need not be alarmed at me, for I assure you that I mean well. Did you recognize the words and air of the little song I sung just now?"

"Oh, yes, sir," answered Kate, with more blushes; "I remember that I sung that verse one night, very foolishly, thinking that I was quite alone at this place, and I was answered by a voice from the other side of the ravine; but I do not know in what words I was answered, for I was really frightened, not expecting to hear a human voice in this wilderness."

"I hope that your memory, or my voice, may improve with time, for I never heard a song that sounded so sweet to me, and I tried to answer it as well as I could at the moment. I am sorry that you do not remember my answer. Shall I repeat it?"

"Oh, no, sir! By no means! I think I must speak to my father or my brother, for I was told to call them if any stranger came near this place, and they will surely say that I have done wrong."

"I am sure they can not blame you. Have they a camp near here?"

"We have a camp; it is not far off," answered Kate, who was fearful of compromising her own companions, though she could not think that any harm would happen to them through such a handsome and agreeable young man.

"It would be safer for them to come over and camp with us, for we have a pretty strong party, and have built a fort, so that we do not fear the Indians. We have had one fight with them, and we whipped them well."

"Was it the sound of your guns, then, that we heard the other night?"

"I suppose so—ours and those of the red-skins. Don't

alarm your people, young lady, for I will just step across on my bridge, and then you can introduce me to them."

Without any more words, Harry Chenault stepped quickly across on the tree, holding his rifle in his hand, and was soon by the side of Kate, who blushed and trembled yet more, as she saw how handsome he was, and knew how sweet were the tones of his voice when he was near her.

" You are even more beautiful than I had thought you," said he ; " but I may not say that now, however much I admire your beauty. If you will lead me to your father and brother, I know I can soon convince them that they will be much safer if they will, camp with my party, for there are many Indians on your side of the ravine, and we have built a fort that will resist all their attacks. If you will show me where your friends are, I am confident—"

He was interrupted by the sharp crack of a rifle, that echoed from the forest, and by a shriek from Kate. In an instant, as it seemed, a white man came bounding toward them.

" Look out for yourself, Kate !" he shouted, " for the wood is full of Indians. Father ! Tête Bois ! The red-skins have surprised us !"

He need not have said so, for the fact was sufficiently evident, as he was followed by more than a score of whooping and yelling Indians, who fired their fusees and arrows as they rushed after him.

" My dear brother !" exclaimed Kate, as she threw her arms around the almost breathless fugitive ; " have they hurt you ?"

" Not yet, Kate. Take care of yourself, my dear girl, for they are right on us. But who is this ? Where is he from ? What is he doing here ?"

" You have no time to talk, sir," quietly answered Chenault. " I am a friend, and that is enough for the present. Do you see that bridge yonder, over the ravine ? Take your sister across, as soon as you can, for you will find friends and safety on the other side. I will defend the passage with my life."

As Harry spoke, he raised his rifle to his shoulder, and sent a bullet through the head of a savage who was advancing up on the group.

John Brainard, who was cool and collected, notwithstanding his surprise and rapid flight, at once perceived that the

bridge opened the only chance of safety for his sister, and hurried her over the fallen tree, half carrying and half supporting her, between the limbs that had been so neatly trimmed by Sam Myers and Harry Chenault.

As for Harry, he rushed to the end of the bridge, drew his revolvers, and commenced firing indiscriminately into his dusky assailants, animated only by the intention of defending the passage, if it should cost him his life.

It is impossible to tell how soon his life would have been lost, if Mr. Brainard and Tête Bois had not rushed up to his aid on the right, and if there had not been a simultaneous discharge of rifles on his left, from the other side of the chasm.

As it was, Chenault felt a sharp pain in his left arm, as if a red-hot iron had been suddenly thrust through it, and saw a white man fall bleeding by his side, and saw that the wounded man was snatched up and carried across the bridge by a powerful and dark-complexioned fellow.

Then he drew his knife, as the loads in his pistols were all discharged, and prepared to sell his life as dearly as possible, thinking only of his promise to defend the bridge and the fair girl with whose voice and face he had become so strongly infatuated.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DESPERATE STRUGGLE.

BEN FARRAR and Green, the latter of whom was so rapidly recovering from his wounds, but not from his fear of Burt Adams, kept Chenault and Myers at work on the fortification, until the young gentlemen vowed and protested that it was strong enough, and that it would be simply nonsensical to work any more. As Harry expressed it, it was a work of supererogation, and he didn't believe in that doctrine.

Harry Chenault proved his faith by his works, or, rather, by his lack of works, for he threw down his spade and pick-ax, and declared that he would not strike another blow, or shovel another pound of earth, on Fort Myers. Carrying out

his resolution, he washed his face and hands, took his rifle, and sauntered down toward the ravine.

Myers thought it strange that his friend had deserted him so unceremoniously, and watched him as he left the fort and walked carelessly down over the plain.

"What can he have gone there for?" thought the engineer. "I will go and look after him, for the sake of his sister, if not for his own."

It was a very friendly resolution on the part of Sam Myers, if not a sensible one, and he carried it out by taking his rifle and his pistols (but not by washing his hands and face as his friend had done), and following, as well as he could guess it, the track of Harry Chenault to the ravine. Having reached the chasm, he looked cautiously about, before crossing the bridge. Soon he heard the clear voice of his friend, singing a low and plaintive melody; saw him step out from the shade of a tree; and was surprised to perceive, on the other side of the chasm, a fair and blushing damsel standing among the parted bushes.

He listened to the conversation that ensued between Chenault and Kate Brainard, and saw the former spring across the bridge and join the young lady who seemed so strangely out of place in that wilderness. His first impulse was to follow his friend, but he concluded, on second thought, that he had better remain where he was.

"He has found his singer," thought Myers, "and she is not a captive among the Indians, but has friends here, a father and brother. I am glad that Harry is in no danger, and hope he will bring them down to our camp, as the company of Farrar and Green has become quite disagreeable. I would like to see the girl myself, but suppose Harry had rather not to be interrupted just now."

An interruption quickly came, however—an interruption of yells and screams and shots. Myers seized his rifle, and was about to hasten to the assistance of his friend, when John Brainard came rushing over the bridge with his sister. Hastily placing Kate behind a tree, the Oregonian loaded his rifle, and fired among the yelling savages on the other side, his example being followed by Myers.

It was soon apparent that the white men were greatly

outnumbered by their assailants, and in a few minutes Tête Bois came across the chasm, bearing the bleeding form of Mr. Brainard. Thus only Harry was left on the other side, and his situation was truly perilous.

"Come across, Harry!" shouted Myers. "Run over the bridge while you can! We will keep off the red devils."

After a hurried glance, which showed him his danger and his only chance for escape, Chenault turned from his antagonists, and rushed to the bridge. The rifles of Myers, John Brainard and Tête Bois, aided by those of Farrar and Green, who had heard the firing, and had hastened to the scene of action, sent death among those who attempted to pursue him; but he had hardly reached the middle of the bridge, when he was overtaken by a tall Indian, who seized him by the waist, as if with the intention of hurling him into the chasm.

It fortunately happened that the young gentleman's foot slipped, and he fell forward on his face, the savage falling upon him. Harry clutched a limb of the tree; his antagonist did the same, and then commenced a struggle, in which it was soon apparent that the tall red-skin would get the better of the white man, who was much exhausted by his exertions, and partially disabled by the wound in his left arm. The remaining Indians carefully kept out of the way of the dreaded rifles, and Harry's friends could get no chance to fire, as his body was interposed between them and his foe.

The savage got an arm around the neck of the white man, and commenced to choke him. It was evident that Chenault must soon give way, weakened as he was, under this anaconda process, and it seemed impossible to assist him. Myers, who was nearly frantic, started to rush out from his cover to the assistance of his friend, and would surely have been shot from the other side, if he had not been restrained by Ben Farrar.

"Hold on!" exclaimed the hunter. "You can't help him by gittin' yerself rubbed out. I'll put a bullet through that Injin, even if it has to go through Mr. Chenault. It's an orful resk, but it's the only thing fur to do!"

The old trapper, with compressed lips and frowning brows, carefully sighted his rifle; but, before he could fire, the sharp report of a pistol was heard, and the savage, shot through the

head, fell back, still keeping his arm, as if in a death-grip, around Harry's neck. The young gentleman, however, had sufficient presence of mind to tighten his hold upon the tree, and the grasp of his antagonist gradually relaxed, until he dropped down into the dark chasm.

Putting forth all his energy Harry rose to his feet, and bounded over the bridge to his friends. The enraged Indians saluted him with a general discharge of bullets and arrows, but he was unharmed, and the rifles of the whites quickly sent the red-skins back to their shelter. It was useless for them to make another attack, as it would be certain death to attempt to cross the ravine, and they withdrew after a while, with a parting volley from the rifles.

Chenault fainted as soon as he reached the arms of his friends, but was soon brought to his senses, and congratulated upon his escape.

"It was indeed a narrow escape," said he. "I thought it was all over with me when that red-skin tightened his grip on my throat, and I am much obliged to you, Farrar, for that shot. I saw you drawing a bead, and I turned away my head, for I thought I had as good a chance to be hit by the bullet as the Indian had."

"Thar's no thanks comin' to me," answered Ben, "though I meant to do my best. Whar' that shot come from, is more'n I can tell; but it warn't no rifle-shot, fur sart'in. P'r'aps it mought have drapped down."

"I think I can show you the marksman," said John Brainard, as he pointed to his sister. "There she stands, with her pistol still in her hand; but I think that Providence must have directed the shot."

Sure enough, there stood Kate Brainard, confused and blushing. In the excitement of the moment, she had forgotten to put aside her pistol, and that, as well as her appearance, told that she had fired the shot.

"Was it really you?" exclaimed Chenault, with a look in which admiration was mingled with wonder. "It hardly seems possible. How could you have fired with such excellent aim?"

"It was quite easy," answered Kate. "I consider myself an excellent pistol-shot, and I had a fine opportunity. When

you turned your head, you exposed the head of the red-skin to my aim, and there could hardly have been a fairer mark. But you should not speak of such things, sir, when you are wounded."

"I think so, too," said Ben Farrar, "and instead of stayin' here palaverin', I think we'd better be gittin' up to camp in a hurry, fur thar's no tellin' but what Burt Adams and his gang mought take a turn, and git in thar' ahead of us."

"I think so too," said Green; "though I know I gave the scoundrel a blizzard out of my rifle that'll be apt to lay him up fur a while."

The advice of these worthies was acted upon, and Mr. Brainard and Harry Chenault were assisted to the camp, which was found to be free from intrusion. The wounds of both were flesh wounds, and, although the loss of blood was considerable, no serious consequences were to be apprehended.

CHAPTER XIV.

GOING DOWN.

TETE Bois, under the direction of his employer, made a scouting visit to Mr. Brainard's camp, and reported, on his return, that it had been visited by Indians, who had destroyed the wagons, driven off the horses, and opened the caches. As his provisions and his means of transportation were gone, Mr. Brainard was obliged to accept the hospitality of his new acquaintances, who were very glad to have a chance to offer it to him, both for his own sake and that of his daughter. Besides, Farrar and Green had found, in the half-breed, an old and esteemed friend, and they were greatly pleased with the arrangement, especially as it seemed to afford them further protection against the dreaded Burt Adams.

"Don't know how they found our camp and our caches," said the half-breed, "'less that villain, Burt Adams, has been 'round thar'. He killed one of our men, I know, for he left his mark on the body."

"Was that your man—the chap who was killed down in the cañon?" asked Ben Farrar. "If it war', you can bet your pile that Burt Adams killed him, and followed up his trail till he found your camp."

"'Spect that's so. We had a fight with Burt Adams and his Injins, on t'other side the mount'ins, and we whipped 'em bad."

"The thunder you did! Then it's plain that the rascal has been layin' for ye on this side. He butted up ag'in us awhile ago, and got a lickin'. Reckon he must have been lookin' fur somebody else. If that's so," continued the hunter, turning to Myers, "I reckon we'd better go to work and make this here fort a leetle stouter."

"If this fort is not strong enough, Ben Farrar," said the engineer, "I can assure you that it will never be made stronger by me. I will leave you to scare yourselves about Burt Adams, and will go to see how Mr. Chenault fares."

Myers found his friend in charge of the fair Kate Brainard, and, after inquiring with regard to the state of his arm, he left him, thinking, as he went, of Harry's sister, Madeline.

Little cared Harry Chenault about the temper in which Myers happened to be, for he was very well satisfied with the care and companionship of Kate Brainard. He would allow no one to dress his wounded arm except that young lady, and it must be confessed that she showed no disposition to object to doing duty as surgeon and nurse. She did the same for her father, whose wounds also needed attention; but it can not be doubted that she preferred to sit by the side of the handsome young gentleman who had risked his life to save her, and whose life she had been the means of saving.

It was not long after Sam Myers had left him, that Harry requested his fair nurse to put a fresh bandage on his arm. When this task was accomplished, he replaced the arm in its sling, and gazed at Kate after the manner of an interesting invalid.

"It hardly seems possible," said he, "that you could have fired the shot that saved my life."

"It was easy to do," answered Kate, "for I had a good mark, as I told you, and I am not a bad shot."

"But your nerves must have been very strong—your hand

must have been very steady—or the bullet would have gone through my head, instead of that of the Indian. Such a hand is worth having, and many men would be proud of it. May I look at that hand? May I hold that wonderful hand in my own?"

He did look at the hand, and did hold it in his own, with Kate's tacit permission.

"It seems incredible that you could have fired that shot," he said; "for this hand is far from steady—it trembles as I hold it."

"That is because you press it so hard," answered the blushing girl.

"Oh, Miss Brainard—Kate—I wish that I might have that hand, with the heart of its owner, to be mine forever!"

"Hush!" exclaimed Kate, quickly withdrawing the coveted hand. "I think I heard my father call me. You must speak to him, sir, about the hand; the heart is already yours."

With these words, she ran out of the cabin, leaving Harry in an ecstasy of happiness.

Under such pleasant circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that the young gentleman's wound healed rapidly, and that he was perfectly recovered within a week.

Sam Myers, who did not approve, as he expressed it, of his friend having all the fun to himself, often brought up the subject of the hid treasure, and urged a continuance of the search for the lost cache; but Chenault was so entirely absorbed in the treasure he had lately acquired, that he could not think or speak of any thing else, and postponed the search, on various pretexts, from day to day.

At last, Myers, who was quite disgusted, and who did not remember how he had behaved when he first fell in love, resolved that he would be put off no longer, and that he would have a plain talk with his friend.

"I must tell you, Harry," he began, "that I am tired of this, and that I do not mean to stand it any longer."

"Tired of what, my dear fellow? What is it that you do not mean to stand?"

"You can not misunderstand my meaning. It is all very well for you to fall in love with a pretty girl, here in the wilderness, and to wish to enjoy her company; but it is not attending to business. It is natural, I suppose—"

"Do you only suppose it to be natural?" interrupted Harry.
"Have you had no experience in such matters?"

"That is neither here nor there, Harry Chenault. I simply say that we did not come here for the purpose of making love. Love-making is very proper, as well as very pleasant; but it ought not to be allowed to interfere with business."

"I shall tell Madeline your opinion on that point," suggested Harry.

"I hardly think you can tell her any thing about it that she does not already know. I think your love-making might be postponed until the return journey, or, at least, that it need not occupy your whole time. We came here for the purpose of searching for that lost cache, or finding the treasure that is concealed somewhere in this neighborhood, and that business should be attended to without delay."

"I tell you what, Sam Myers, you wish to marry my sister Madeline, but you are a proud-spirited fellow, and you think you ought to wait until you are rich. I think you are stupid, because I have reason to believe that Madeline does not wish to wait. However, as you are obstinate, I advise you to find that treasure, if you really believe it to be in existence. I will not interfere with you, and all you find will be your own. Then you can be as purse-proud as you please, and you need not put forward the plea of poverty as an excuse for deferring your marriage."

"Can you suppose, Harry, that I would touch it, unless you were present—you, who have the greatest claim to it? Besides, I need your advice and assistance."

"Very well. If I help you I shall claim my share; are you not afraid of Burt Adams?"

"I have none of Ben Farrar's fears. We have not seen or heard any thing of that scamp, since the encounter at the cañon. It is probable that the blizzard that Green says he gave him has sent him to his last account, or has so disabled him as to make him harmless."

"Perhaps you are able to throw some new light on the subject."

"I think I am. The directions on the map say that a circle of XX strikes the cache, and we are also told to drop down a perpendicular. I have ascertained that a radius of twenty

yards exactly reaches the edge of the cañon, into which, as I suppose, the perpendicular should be dropped."

"The idea is a reasonable one, and we may as well act upon it. After dinner, if you wish, we will go down, and make the experiment."

As Myers did wish it, the two friends set out, after dinner had been discussed, and the inevitable pipes had been smoked. They carried an ax, a hammer, a crowbar and a long lariat. In addition to these implements, Myers had provided himself with a stout canvas-bag, which was capable of holding quite as much gold as he could conveniently carry on his back.

When they reached the square stone, they measured, with a tape-line, twenty yards, in a direct line to the cañon. It was found, as Myers had said, that the nearest point on the edge of the cañon was exactly twenty yards from the stone.

"This was only one of my guesses," said the engineer, "but I believe that it was a good guess, and that the result will prove it so. This line of twenty yards, used as the radius of a circle, strikes this point at the edge of the cañon, and there is no other point in the circle at which a perpendicular could be let down, unless it should be let down into the solid earth, which is manifestly out of the question."

"I think you are right," answered Harry. "If the direction in the map means any thing, it must refer to this precise point. The next thing is, to let down the perpendicular. What do you propose on that point?"

"I propose to tie a heavy stone to the end of the lariat, and drop it down into the ravine. When it reaches the bottom, we will cross over to the other side, descend the cañon, and seek for the treasure at the place where we find the stone."

"I suppose it might be done in that way, but I think I can name a speedier and better plan. Let me be the weight, Myers, instead of a stone. The lariat is long enough and strong enough, and I will be able to examine the rock as I go down, and to tell whether there are any indications of a cache."

"It is a good idea, my boy, but it might be a dangerous experiment, and my plan is perfectly safe."

"Dangerous! Not as dangerous as going down into a well. The ravine, at this point, is perfectly precipitous, and

you can easily lower me down. I see no possibility of danger."

"Very well," said Myers, after reflecting upon the proposition. "I believe there is no solid objection to the plan. It would be really a good idea for one of us to go down, and, as you are the lightest weight, you are the best man for the business. I will lower you down slowly, so that you can make examinations on your way. If you see any indications of a cache, you can easily tell me to stop, until you examine the place."

As this plan was agreed to, a stout stick was made well fast to one end of the lariat, and the rope of twisted rawhide was partly coiled around a tree, so as to facilitate the operation of lowering. Harry Chenault slipped the hammer in his belt, seated himself astride of the stout stick, and carefully let himself over the edge of the precipice, while his companion gradually eased off the lariat, to make his descent safe and slow.

"Keep a good look-out, my boy, and tell me if you see any thing," was Myers' last injunction, as his friend disappeared from view.

"All right, my boy. Lower away!"

The engineer lowered away as directed, carefully and slowly, listening intently for the signal that should tell him to stop, but he heard nothing.

He continued to let out the line, until he thought that Harry must be more than half-way to the bottom of the cañon, when, suddenly, the weight was missed from the end of the lariat, and the strained hide flew up with a jerk.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, as his face became pale, and his eyes were distorted with horror. "The rope has broken, and he has fallen to the bottom! The fall has certainly killed him, or has mangled him terribly!"

Hastily pulling up the rope, he perceived that it was indeed broken, having been cut, probably, by some projecting fragment of rock.

With his heart full of anxiety, and bitterly reproaching himself for having been the cause of the death of his friend, Myers ran to the bridge, and hastened over it with trembling steps, expecting to see the mangled form, and receive the last words, of one who had been to him "closer than a brother."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CACHE AT LAST.

MR. BRAINARD recovered as rapidly as Harry Chenault. As his wounds were but flesh-wounds, they soon healed, and he felt as well as ever.

Before his recovery was complete, he was made aware of the feelings and intentions of Harry Chenault with regard to his daughter Kate. The greater part of his drafts on St. Louis were drawn upon the firm of Chenault & Co., and he had kept them, fortunately, about his person, so that they had escaped the ravages of Burt Adams and his Indians. When he learned that the young gentleman was the son of the wealthy and respected Pierre Chenault, he could not help regarding the match as a very eligible one, and so expressed himself to Kate, but said that he was not willing to give any definite answer, until he could reach St. Louis and have an interview with Harry's father.

This was entirely agreeable to Harry, who assured Kate that the interview could not be otherwise than satisfactory, as the "old gentleman" would do all in his power to please his only son, and would satisfy her father that that only son was in every respect a proper person to be intrusted with even such a precious treasure as Kate Brainard.

Pursuing the subject further, Mr. Brainard had several interviews with Harry Chenault himself, and in the course of conversation occasionally asked him some pretty close questions, to all of which the young gentleman replied plainly and frankly, until he was asked what had brought him into that remote wilderness, when his answers were rather evasive.

"We are on a tour of investigation," said he. "My friend Myers and myself wished to recruit our health and to gain some experience of life in this wild but delightful region. We desired to examine the country, with a view to future enterprises, and Myers, who is more scientific than I am, thought

it possible that gold might be found among these mountain-streams and gulches."

"It is a strange idea, but more wonderful things have been heard of. Have you made any discoveries?"

"Not yet; we have been fully occupied with more exciting business. We shall soon be obliged, of course, to return to St. Louis, but I must say, for my own part, that the result of the journey has completely satisfied me thus far."

After this conversation, Mr. Brainard regarded Harry Che-nault with more suspicion, and doubted whether the character of that young gentleman would bear a close inquiry.

The subject of his daughter and her lover did not shut out the remembrance of his lost cache, did not lessen his anxiety concerning his hid treasure.

As soon as he felt well and strong again, he held a consultation with Tête Bois, his confidant and right-hand man, to whom he opened the subject that was then nearest to his heart.

Although the half-breed was well acquainted with the character of Burt Adams, respected the prowess of the outlaw, and considered him a dangerous opponent, he had not that superstitious fear of him, with which Farrar and Green seemed to be imbued, and he only longed for an opportunity to meet and punish the renegade. Therefore, he was willing and ready to assist his employer, and to assent fully to his arguments.

"We must go to work, Tête Bois," said Mr. Brainard, "for we have lost a great deal of time, though I suppose it is not our fault. I am sure that I was near the cache when we were interrupted by the onslaught of the Indians. I can easily find the spot again, and with your assistance, can recover my gold. I suppose you are not now troubled about Burt Adams."

"'Spect Burt Adams has been rubbed out or laid up," answered the half-breed. "'Spect his Injins won't want to fight much, after bein' whipped three times."

"It will be easy enough for us, then, to go down into the cañon, and search for my cache. I have more reason, now, to wish for that gold, than I had before—a reason which I need not explain to you."

"Tête Bois is ready, and Burt Adams and all his Injins can't scare him."

"We must work, my friend, and we must do quickly what we have to do, for I understand that these people intend to return to the States very soon, and we have no time to spare. They are good men, I have no doubt, but I do not wish to betray the secret of my cache, even to them, for the prospect of great gain might tempt the best men to do evil. I know one of them, as the son of one of the first merchants in St. Louis, but I had rather not rely even on him; although he says that he loves my daughter."

"Does Miss Kate love him?"

"I believe she does."

"Ugh! Girls have plenty sense. Better leave 'em 'lone—'specially Miss Kate. But thar's no use sayin' anythin' 'bout the cache to anybody."

"I think you are right, old friend. We will go there by ourselves, as we went before, and I am sure that we can carry it away quietly. We will leave the camp while they are at dinner, and we will carry with us a hammer and a pickax, which we can easily conceal under our clothes. I have a bag that will hold part of the gold, and the rest we can easily put in the pockets of our hunting-shirts."

"All right. I do what you do."

"I think we had better not take my son John with us, as we wish to act as secretly as we can, and if three of us left the camp together, it might be noticed. We can not be too careful, Tête Bois, and we had better go by ourselves, as there is no danger to be apprehended."

"All right. I think what you think."

The two set out, duly armed and equipped, taking care to elude the observation of the other occupants of the camp.

They succeeded in escaping observation, crossed the chasm upon the bridge that had been made by Myers and Chenault, and descended the declivity that led into the cañon.

When they reached the bottom, they found every thing as they had last seen it. The sand that covered the body of the unfortunate Thomas had not been disturbed; the ground was still stained; the brook flowed on as pleasantly and as musically as if it had never run with the blood of a murdered man; and the round stone that had covered the old cache was in the same position they had left it in.

Anxious as Mr. Brainard was to begin the search for his long-hid treasure, his anxiety did not prevent him from using proper precautions. With the aid of the half-breed, he carefully examined the ravine, including all its projections and recesses. Having satisfied himself that no one was concealed in the vicinity, and that they were secure from observation, he directed his companion to take his station near the foot of the declivity, while he, with his hammer, commenced to sound the rocky side of the ravine.

"I will soon find the place," said he, "for I am on the right track, and a single blow of the hammer will indicate the cache. Ah! I think I have it now, for the rock is surely hollow here. Tête Bois, bring the pickax, and help me to pull out this stone."

The half-breed sprung forward as ordered; the sharp point of the pickax was inserted in a crevice of the rock, and by the joint exertions of the two men, a large stone was loosened from the side of the ravine, and fell at their feet.

"See!" exclaimed Mr. Brainard, as he drew out a skin from the hole that was thus exposed. "It is safe! It is all there."

The half-breed looked, with staring eyes, and saw, indeed, that the hole was nearly filled with shining gold.

They were so absorbed by this sight, that neither of them saw two dark forms that crept up toward them, under the shadow of the cliff, the first of whom clutched a long knife.

As Tête Bois turned to congratulate his employer, he was startled by a heavy fall, a crash, and a yell, close at his side.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHO IS THE OWNER?

THE Indian named No Smoke, whom Burt Adams had selected as a confidant, soon came to the conclusion, with the natural suspicion of his race, that his patron was not acting fairly with him. He felt certain that the outlaw had visited the ravine for the purpose of seeking the treasure, and thought

it more than probable that he had found it, and had either taken possession of it for his own use, or had concealed it in some other place. He was determined to inquire into the matter, and sought an early opportunity for an interview with Adams, asking him when he meant to search for the white man's cache.

"I have been there," answered the outlaw. "The cache has been opened, and the gold is gone."

"Who took him away? Did the Long Knife take him?"

"I hain't touched the gold, red-skin," angrily answered Adams. "The cache had been opened, as I told ye, and you kin see that fur yerself. I think I know, though, whar' the gold is, and ef you've got grit enough and a good knife, you may go with me and hunt fur it."

"No Smoke will go, to find the gold that will make him a big man in St. Louis. Let the Long Knife lead the way!"

Adams led the way, as his accomplice requested, closely followed by the Indian, who kept his hand on his knife, resolved, at the first evidence of treachery, to stab the white man in the back.

The outlaw showed no sign of treachery, but led the way, silently and carefully, until they reached the edge of the cañon in which the treasure was supposed to be concealed, when he suddenly stopped, and motioned to his companion to do the same.

Both halted, just at the declivity that led down into the ravine, and listened intently, with their ears close to the ground.

"Thar's somebody down thar'," whispered the outlaw, "and I think thar's white men in the cañon. Foller me, No Smoke, but be as still as a snake, and hev' yer knife ready."

Adams drew his long knife, and quietly and cautiously glided down the declivity, closely followed by his Indian ally, who evinced an equal amount of caution.

Just before the outlaw reached the bottom of the ravine, he again stopped, motioning back his comrade. Peering around a projecting rock, he perceived Mr. Brainard and Tête Bois engaged in their search.

"Thar's two of 'em, No Smoke," he again whispered, "and one of 'em is the white man who made the new cache."

T'other is that big Kanucker, Tête Bois. They're lookin' fur the cache, and one is tryin' the rocks with a hammer. Jest keep quiet till we see whar' the gold is hid, and then we'll slip up on 'em, and take it all."

Both crouched in the shadow of the rock, remaining perfectly quiet, while Mr. Brainard pursued his explorations, until the outlaw again exclaimed, in an excited whisper:

"They've found it, red-skin! T'other one speaks to the big one, and the big one rushes up to him with a pickax. Yes—they've stuck the pickax into the rock, and are pryin' at it. Thar' comes out a big chunk of stun', and the cache is opened! I see the glitter of the gold in the hole! Grip yer knife, red-skin, and foller me!"

Stealthily and silently as before, and with a deadly purpose at their hearts, the white man and the Indian stole down into the cañon, across the little brook, and over the soft and yielding sand, toward their intended victims, who were so occupied with gazing upon the discovered treasure, that they could not think of danger.

Swiftly the outlaw glided up to Tête Bois, who stood nearest to him, and who was the most to be dreaded. He raised his long knife, to plunge it into the throat of the half-breed, when there was a cracking sound above his head, like the snapping of a whip, and a heavy body fell upon his head and shoulders, crushing him to the earth.

The body was that of Harry Chenault, whose fall, when his lariat snapped, had been thus opportunely broken. The young gentleman was quickly on his feet, looked around in surprise, and drew his pistol for the purpose of defending himself against all enemies.

The outlaw, also, soon recovered from the shock, and rushed upon his new assailant with his long knife. Chenault would have been surprised, and might have been killed, had it not been for the prompt interference of Tête Bois, who had instantly recognized both Harry and the outlaw. He seized Adams in his vice-like grip, forced his knife from his hand, and threw him on the sand, where he held him down by placing a knee on his chest.

Harry Chenault, comprehending the position of affairs, fired his pistol at No Smoke, and missed him; but the retreating

Indian was shot by Sam Myers, who came rushing down into the ravine, to find the mangled body of his friend.

It is questionable which one of the five men was most surprised, although it is certain that the half-breed, with his customary imperturbability, betrayed the least amazement.

"Are you really living, Harry?" exclaimed Myers. "I expected to find you dashed to pieces."

"Perhaps I would have been, if that fellow there had not saved my life by getting in the way, so that I could fall on him."

"Who is he? What was he doing here?"

"A particular friend of Ben Farrar's—Burt Adams by name. He was here, of course, for the purpose of murder. By the way, Tête Bois, he had better be tied, and I have enough lariat left for that business."

While Burt Adams was being bound by the half-breed, Mr. Brainard took the opportunity to express his own surprise.

"How did you happen to fall down into the ravine, Mr. Chenault?" he asked. "It is strange that the fall did not kill you."

"I was only being let down as a perpendicular, sir, and my rope broke; but I did not fall far. The fact is, that I was trying to find some treasure, in a lost cache, that was made here many years ago. Angels and ministers of grace defend us! You have found it! How did that happen?"

"Those who hide well can find well."

"Is that really your cache?"

"It is; how came you to know any thing about it?"

"Then we are dished, if I may use the expression. It was to find that cache that we came all the way from St. Louis, led on by an old map that accidentally came into my possession. Myers, have you that map about you?"

"Here it is," answered the engineer, unfolding the mysterious map, whose directions they had followed such a distance.

"It is my map," exclaimed Mr. Brainard. "I made it as a clue to this cache, and lost it, many years ago, during a snow-storm in the mountains, when I escaped from the Indians. I never suspected that any one else would be able to find the place."

"I think it fortunate, however, that we happened to be here,"

said Harry. "It is plainly your property, Mr. Brainard, for I now recognize your initials on the map. For my part, I have found a treasure in the wilderness, that is worth a dozen such caches to me."

CHAPTER XVII.

A DEVELOPMENT—CONCLUSION.

"Ef that business is finished," said Tête Bois, pointing to the bound form of Burt Adams, "I'd like to ask what's to be done with this whelp. Strikes me that Ben Farrar and his pardner would like to have the killin' of him."

"I suppose they would," answered Harry Chenault; "but perhaps he might slip away from us while we were taking him to the camp, and it would be better to make an end of him on the spot."

"I believe you're right, sir. Give me a pistol, and I'll settle him. It looks kinder cold-blooded, but sech wild critters oughter to be put outen the way."

"Wait a moment," exclaimed Chenault, as he bent down by the side of the outlaw. "Adams, where and how did you get that ring?"

"None of yer durned business," was the dogged reply.

"It is my business, Adams. You will soon be a dead man, unless you speak the truth; but, if you will tell me all you know about that ring, you shall have your life, and may go in peace."

"Say you all so?" asked the outlaw.

"Say so, my friends," entreated Harry, "if you have any regard or consideration for me."

All assented, and Adams commenced his statement:

"That thar' ring," said he, "was give to me by Mus-to-qua, a Crow chief, who died a while ago. He got the ring from a white man, who was a prisoner with the tribe. Mus-to-qua caught the white man diggin' gold, and cachin' it. He killed him, and buried him, and tuk this ring off his finger. The old chief told me, ef I'd agree to take car' of his people, he'd

give me the ring, and show me how to find the cache, all of which he did, afore he died. That's all I know 'bout it. Will ye let me up now?"

"Let me relieve you of this ring, first. Did you learn the name of the white man?"

"Never heerd it."

"I can tell it. This ring belonged to Henry Chenault, my father's brother. My father has a ring precisely like it. We knew that uncle Henry had been taken captive by the Indians, but we never learned his fate. Did you find that cache, Adams?"

"Thar's the cache—that hole what was covered by the round stone; but it has been opened."

"I opened the cache," said Mr. Brainard. "It was there that I found most of my gold."

"Then I am a sharer," suggested Harry, laughingly, "or my sister Madeline is, as she is the heiress of my uncle Henry's property. I suppose, Myers, that Madeline's share will come to you."

"Will you let me up now?" asked Burt Adams.

"Yes. Untie him, Tête Bois, and send him on his way rejoicing; but be careful that he takes no weapon with him."

The outlaw was loosed, and walked away, after a greedy glance at the gold in the cache, and an angry glare at his victors. He was carefully watched by Tête Bois, until he was out of sight.

"Now, Mr. Brainard," said Harry, "if you will gather up the gold, we will go to camp, and make arrangements to start for St. Louis, as all our objects seem to have been accomplished."

The gold dust was carefully collected, and placed in canvas-bags, and the party made their way back to camp.

"It is my opinion," said Myers, when they had crossed the ravine, "that we had better not say any thing to Farrar and Green, about having caught Burt Adams and let him loose, or they would set us at work on the fort immediately."

This was unanimously assented to, and a profound silence was maintained, not only on the subject of Burt Adams, but on that of the treasure, which was quietly stowed away, where it could not attract attention.

Farrar and Green were truly glad that their employers had decided to return to "the States," as they were anxious to be far away from the outlaw whose vicinity they so much dreaded. Consequently, they willingly seconded all arrangements that were made for a speedy departure, and the train was in readiness, early the next morning. Horses were easily supplied for Mr. Brainard and his party, and all the treasure-seekers and their attendants set out, in good spirits, on their way to civilization.

They reached St. Louis without any serious mishap, and it was not long before Morris Brainard had an interview with Colonel Chenault, which was entirely satisfactory to both those gentlemen and to two other parties. In due course of time, Harry Chenault and Kate Brainard were made one, and the affection that had been awakened in the wilderness was cemented by a holy and perpetual tie.

Mr. Brainard made an equal division of the discovered treasure, and Harry Chenault compelled his friend Myers to accept of that which would have been his sister's share, telling him that what was Madeline's would soon be his, "and it made no difference," and so it was, and the young engineer gained the desire of his heart.

The next year a party was sent out to the head-waters of the Missouri and the Yellowstone, to seek for gold; but they lost their way, and were dispersed by the Indians, and it was many years before more gold was discovered in that locality, the attractions of California and other places proving superior to those of such a remote and unsettled region.

THE END.

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VOL. I, }
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CONTENTS.

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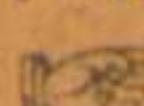
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